ALLAN·ADAIR

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THE SEAL TOSSED RORY GAILY FROM SIDE TO SIDE.

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ALLAN ADAIR

or

HERE AND THERE IN MANY LANDS

By

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WITH COLOURED AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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HERE AND THERE IN MANY LANDS

CHAPTER I

'THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN'

ALLAN ADAIR was a boy in a thousand. I do not say so to his credit, nor to his discredit. I do not wish to set him up as a plaster image for my worthy young readers to adore. I have no great liking for plaster images myself! Boys will be boys; and so long as they are pure in mind and true at heart, I like them all the better because they are boys.

I say, then, that Allan Adair was a boy in a thousand; and when I add that all the other nine hundred and ninety-nine boys would probably have done, thought, and acted precisely as Allan did, under like circumstances, I believe you will know what I mean.

But when we first meet our young hero, he is like his salmon rod, all out of joint. He is sitting by the

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banks of the most beautiful and wildly romantic river in all broad Scotland—surely that is saying a deal—the queenly Tay.

Do not imagine a river in any way like the smooth and winding Thames, which, I grant you, is very pretty in many of its reaches, whether overshadowed by hills and darkling woods, or where, lower down, it goes winding and winding, meandering and meandering, all overhung by pollards, and backed by level green meadows, where, in the season, cattle wander knee-deep in grass and buttercups. This is beautiful, though you may not call it anything else. The scenery is soothing, too, and calmative; and when I have been lying ill in a foreign land, hot with fever and sleepless, I have repeated to myself that sweet Psalm, xxiii:

> 'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
> He makes me down to lie
> In pastures green; He leadeth me
> The quiet waters by.'

Then, I declare to you, the bonnie banks of the Thames would rise up before me—I saw the browsing kine, the buttercups, the cowslips and daisies; I heard the murmur of the summer bees, and the soft sighing of wind in the willows; then the gentle, placid river, gliding darkly past, bore me away and away into dreamland.

But the Tay is no such river as this. It is quiet sometimes near to the ancient city of Dundee, where it is miles and miles in width, unless chafed by storm-winds, as on that awful night when, in the darkness, the bridge blew down, and a whole trainload of people was dashed over, and never seen again.

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Go up the Tay, not by train, but on foot or on 'bike,' up and up, and the farther you proceed, the wilder and the more enchantingly lovely becomes the scenery. The river becomes darker and darker as it rolls and dashes and foams through many a gloomy defile, forming cascades and deep 'pots' or pools that would give you a nightmare the first time you went to bed after beholding them.

This is the home of the red salmon (*Salmo salar*). These are the haunts of the wily otter, the most ferocious animal that we now have in Britain.

But if the river itself is turbulent and violent, for ever fighting with the boulders it encounters in its swift course seaward, for ever foaming and dashing against the rocky cliffs, that have been worn smooth by the chafing of ages, the beauty of scenery all around the stream is unsurpassable; mind, I do not say on *each* side, because the river changes its course so often, that all around it is the glory of magnificence and romance combined. Those beautiful hills, clad to their summits with splendid pine-trees, with the mountains behind, where rest the sunset's last crimson beams, whose summits receive the first coy kiss of morning, have inspired many an artist, dreamer, and poet with thoughts they trembled to place on canvas or put into verse.

Yet is there nothing of gloom or sadness about the Tay above Dunkeld, nothing of the savage grandeur of glorious but treeless Skye. The greenery of the forest, the golden glory of laburnum, broom, and furze in spring-time, and the splendour of crimson or pink heath or heather in autumn, relieve the eye and make you contented and happy in the midst of all

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that Nature has, with so lavish a hand, spread out before you.

But poor Allan Adair was neither contented nor happy, as he sat all alone on a green bank under a rock and near to the river. A bold Scottish yellow-haired lad of fourteen or thereabouts, whose handsome face, sturdy legs—he wore the kilt—and massive knees gave promise of a strong and healthful manhood.

But there was a frown on his face that did not well become it. A book of travels lay by his side, and he took it up as if to read, but presently threw it down again almost in disgust. His mind was dwelling on a recent misfortune which had befallen him.

Then he took up his line and looked disconsolately at the hookless end of the tippet. The latter had been snapped through. Allan was a Highlander, and spoke no broad Scotch—only English and the purest Gaelic. The latter was not seldom needed.

'Such a beauty, too!' he said to himself aloud. 'Fifteen pounds if an ounce! Couldn't have been a pike. No, no; there are none here that ever I saw. Besides, didn't I catch a glimpse of her as she sprang, and of her orange-red sides glinting in the sun? And my beautiful fly, too, gone—gone for ever. How proudly I would have marched home with my salmon, and how proud mother and sissie would have been when they met me, and saw my prize!'

'But the gut couldn't have been bearable,' he added. Then he shook his little clenched fist at an invisible foe.

'John Scott,' he said, 'when I go back to Perth I'll half scare the life out of your old body for selling me

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ALLAN FIRED AT THE OTTER.

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such stuff. I'll pretend I'm going to shoot you with dear dead father's empty revolver. That's what I'll do.'

From his fishing-bag he took out the identical instrument as he spoke. Unknown to his mother, whom he would not have frightened for all the world, he used to carry the revolver when he went to the hill. This was very wrong, and he knew it. But he wanted to be a really good shot, because, if there was one thing more than another that the boy had thoroughly made up his mind about, it was to travel when he grew bigger. He might join the navy or the army—or he didn't care what, so long as it took him away, far away into the wild countries he was so fond of reading about. He had shot more than one polecat with this short but dangerous-looking weapon, and once he had nearly shot himself. This might have been good practice, but hardly commendable.

He was lying on his back, with the revolver still in his hand, and just for fun was 'drawing a bead' on a hawk that was hovering high above—not that he meant to fire; that would have been foolish—when upon his quick ear fell the sound of a slight plash. Allan was on his knees in a moment. To his utter astonishment, on a huge boulder in mid-stream squatted a great bright-eyed glittering otter, and under his forelegs a large salmon.

The boy took steady aim and fired. The otter's head fell, and he never moved again; only a red stream was trickling over the stone, which told how good the boy's shot had been. Allan was greatly excited now.

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'I—I—I've killed him!' he cried. He would dive in now, swim to the boulder, and bring both his trophies to bank. So highly excited did he feel, that he begrudged the time it needed to undress. Little did he know the danger he was to encounter. He had oftentimes crossed the Tay, but never at so wild a spot as this.

He thought not of fear, however; indeed, he felt none. With a rush across the green bank, he made the plunge, leaping far into the rapid river. Then began the battle with the wild black waters. But soon he knew to his cost that he had over-calculated his strength. Struggle as he might—and right pluckily he did struggle—he was tossed like a cork round and round in a whirlpool that swept adown the stream. There was a roaring in his ears, bright flashes of coloured light crossed his eyes, then came dreams of beautiful scenery that he seemed to be looking down upon from some mighty mountain. After that, insensibility! He neither knew nor felt anything more. Felt nothing more until he found himself lying on the grass again, but much farther down stream, with his intimate friend Rory—the best fisher-lad in all the country-side—kneeling by his side and crying bitterly.

'Oh dear! oh dear!' cried Rory O'Flinn, when poor Allan opened his weary eyes, and closed them once again. 'Oh dear, and it's alive ye are after all! Och, bless the saints that sent me here, to save the dear soul and body av ye. But I'll run for your clothes.'

He suited action to his words, and soon returned. Allan was sitting up by this time, but was terribly

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sick from exhaustion. Rory rolled him in his clothes, and soon he was able to talk.

'It's the narrow escape you've had, Allan; and surely ye won't forget to say your prayers to-night.'

'No, I don't ever,' replied the boy faintly; but in a few minutes' time he talked more strongly.

'How did you fish me out, Rory?'

'Easy enough, surely; you were floatin' down stream like a dead carvanach (perch), so I got ye by the long hair, and in you came like a darlint. And here ye are, your mother's joy, and not dead at all at all. I took ye by the legs, and the wather poured out av ye, and I whacked ye on the back till I thought I'd killed ye entoirely. Och and och, for the joy that is in me!'

It will be observed that the plan adopted by Rory was hardly in accordance with that of Sylvester for the restoration of the apparently drowned. But it was effectual, nevertheless. Allan laughed a little now. Then he got up and shook himself as a collie dog does; but the effort made him giddy—he reeled, and was glad to sit down again.

'It's yourself,' commanded Rory, 'that'll lie here in the blissed sunshine till I come back.'

'And where are you going?'

'I'm going for that big fish, to be sure, and the otter, to make you a sporran.'

Allan seized him by the hand.

'Rory, you mustn't; you shan't! Your life is as precious as mine.'

'Maybe,' said Rory, with a laugh that twinkled round his eyes; 'but I'm not such a precious fool as yourself!'

'Ye see,' he continued, 'I'll cross just here, where

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the wather is dark and quiet, then up the bank, and close by it is the big stone.'

'Well, I'll lie and wait. Don't hurry, Rory; but oh, don't be long!'

And Rory wasn't long. In ten minutes' time he was back to bank, fish, otter, and all.

Allan laughed, and almost cried for joy, for he was still a trifle hysterical.

'Rory! Rory! this is the identical salmon I hooked. Look at my beautiful fly, "Professor Wilson," in his gab. Shake hands, Rory, shake hands; you've saved my life, you've saved my fish, saved my otter, and saved my bonnie fly. I'll never forget you, Rory, never in all my days.'

'Pooh, lad! be keeping aisy now. Sure your life is nothing at all—I mean the saving of it. But—but what a splendid shot you are!'

'Shot, Rory? Nonsense. It was the biggest fluke ever I made in my life. You see the fish was about half-dead when it got away, and then the otter caught it.'

'An' it was like the impidence o' the craytur to sit down to ate it before the very face av you. But it's a quare world, a quare world entoirely. But see what I brought in my basket—a beautiful pertater pie and a pint av sweet milk. Now, if you'll just be after ateing a morsel, the strength will all come back to you, and I'll go with you and help carry your trophies.'

And so Allan, with his friend, made a fairly hearty meal for one who had been so recently in the very jaws of death. Though Rory O'Flinn was no taller than Allan, he was a year older. Irish, of course,

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and far indeed from bad-looking, with just that twinkle of fun in his eyes one likes to see, with curious ways of looking at things, and a fund of merriment ever ready to burst forth, if there was but half an excuse for it.

Rory had come but recently to live in Allan's district, but the boys were already fast friends. They had met by accident by the river-side—I think we usually do meet our best friends by so-called accident. The Irish boy was living with an uncle in a small cottage, with a bit of land around it, high up on a well-wooded brae-side; for, alas! he was an orphan. His father had been dead a year or two, his mother only recently; and honest Rory's eyes always filled with tears when he spoke of her.

They had been acquaintances for some time before Allan presumed to ask Rory for his former story. And when he did tell it, it was just as simple and unaffected as the boy himself.

'Yes, me bhoy,' said Rory, as they sat together one bright sunny day when it was far too hot for the trout to feed. 'Yes, Allan, maybe you'd hardly believe me, but I had a father and a mother both, onct upon a time; but poor mother has gone up-bye, and father was a sailor. He went away to sea and niver returned. It's down among the mermaids father is. But niver a brother nor sister had I, except the sow, the craytur, and it would have done the soul that is in ye good to see her turn up her eyes when I scratched the back av her.

'Ye see, Allan, me parents were poor, but they were honest; and troth it's more'n the landlord himself was.

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'It was soon after father went away that the wild troubles began on us, and we had first a bad harvest, and och! all the bit av corn was destroyed with the hail and the wind and the rain, and sure the cows and the pig had most av it after that. But the hens, the darlints, were good to us, and sure you'd have thought they knew all about it, and we had more eggs the first winter than iver we had before. Then the sow had babies, and it was meself that trudged with them all the way to the market, just wi' the help of a neighbour's dog. We all slept together two nights in a corrie, wi' Paddy the dog to guard the entrance.

'*I* was happy, and so were the baby-pigs; but happier when Paddy and I came back together with the shining coins rattling in me pocket. Then the landlord had his bit o' rint, and we expected father home every day when spring-time came. We had enough to live on; and between you and me, Allan, there's many a bushel of oatmeal the praste, honest man, sent us, and he lent us corn, too. So we sowed our bit o' land, and planted the praties with the blessin' av God and the minister. But summer flew by, and harvest came again, but och! no father back from the ocean wave.

'I could see my poor mother was languishing; her eyes were hollower, her cheeks grew thin, and often and often I found her cryin' all by herself. Then I just sat down like, and put me arms about her, intending to spake the comfortin' word to her. But sorra a thing I could say; so I just broke down like the booby I was, and—we wept together.

'Winter came on, oh, such a wild, wild winter!

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and it was hardly to the byre I could get to feed the beasties for the snow and the awful wind. The drift whirled in through the broken door, and the hens shivered on the rafters. The cows, the crayturs, lowed mournfully in their stalls, which was mostly snow, and the piggie—well, I just covered her over with an old blue coat o' father's, and left her to sleep.

'I'd been away for maybe an hour, and when I came back to the shieling, who should be there but the minister, dear man? He was sitting by me mother, and holding her cowld hand. He niver spoke, but just handed me a paper and pointed to a place in it.

'Och, Allan, asthore, the ears av me whistled. I reeled and thought I'd fall entoirely when I read the headings over the terrible news:

"TOTAL WRECK OF THE BARQUE BRIAN O'LYNN.
LOSS OF ALL HANDS."

'"Cheer up, dear bhoy; God is still with us!"

'It was the voice of the good minister himself; but it sounded far, far away. It was like a voice in heaven itself.

'Then, Allan, I pulled myself together, as men should do; and when I looked at poor mother, with her white, wet face, I felt that my time had come. Before this the struggle was all hers.

'Now *I* had the battle to face, and I was going to try with all the stringth that was in me.'

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CHAPTER II

BY THE BANKS OF THE QUEENLY TAY

POOR Rory O'Flinn was a thorough Irish lad, with music and romance in his soul, and that real love of country which only the Celtic race seem to possess in so high a degree.

'Och, Allan! Oireland is a beautiful country, and sorry and weak was my heart when I left it. But let me tell you how it came about.

'I meself was the farmer now o' Little Kintail; my mother was lost. No, the raison wasn't gone, but she didn't knit any more, and she didn't read; only when the minister spoke kindly words to her she would listen and weep.

'The raison within her was shaken, and it would be for ever spaking o' poor, dead, drowned father, she'd be.

'He was just outside in the fields, and she must be gettin' the praties ready for his dinner, for it was tired and wet he'd be, with the hard work that was on to him; so she'd bustle about a bit, the kind minister lookin' pretty sadly on. Then she'd put a hand to her brow, as if trying hard to remimber something, and the man av God would get up and lead her quietly back to her chair. An' so things

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kept on for a year and maybe more, and then the poor sow died! Sorrow niver comes singly, for a cow broke her leg, and didn't rally from the shock at all at all.

'But the worst was soon to come, and I'll not be afther telling you much about it, Allan. But one day, when hoeing in the field, who should I see coming slowly up but the good minister himself and the parish doctor? Something seemed to tell me that my mother was gone. A big lump nearly choked me. Down went the hoe, and down I lay in the weeds beside it, and cried till I thought the heart that was in me would break in two.

. . . .

'They buried her in the bare, lonesome graveyard on Clough Hill side. I was in a dhrame all the time. 'Twas, maybe, better; but when I returned home to the shieling, and found it empty and cold, with niver a bit o' fire in the grate, and only a man there—as sure as I'm telling ye, he was ugly enough to frighten all the mice away—then I knew I was a pauper.

'The minister took me home with him, and kind and kind he was, but he couldn't be my mother. And so, when every stick was sold, and even the one cow, who, poor baste, went lowin' away from Kintail moanin' and lookin' back, and when the grasping agent gave me back jist one pound out av all we'd had then:

'"Rory," says I to myself, "there's no more Connemara for you. Go and kiss your mother's grave, and be off wi' ye to your Scottish uncle's. He loved your mother, and will give you berth and bield till ye find a ship to take you to the ocean wild."

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Fain would the dear old man av God have kept me.

'Oh, that long, long, weary march to Dublin, Allan! niver shall I forget it. And my poor bit of a jacket, that wouldn't keep out the rain, so thin was it. I slept every night in a barnyard or under a hedge. Twice, sure, was I bitten by dogs; but niver—and it's the blissed truth I'm telling ye—did I go near a house to beg except for a mouthful o' wather. And sometimes they gave me bread.

'I'd thrown away my shoes, and I didn't look respectable when I got to the big city at last. They refused to take the scarecrow on the boat at first, but when I broke down and cried the kind-faced captain made me tell all my story. Then he turns to the stooard, and "Stooard," says he, "we'll be taking the bhoy after all. You'll give him his pick o' food, and niver a farthing you'll charge for his ticket!"'

'How nice of him!' said Allan.

'Wasn't it, now? And I still had most of my pound, so I bought good clothes—second-hand—in Glasgow, and then trudged on to uncle's, quite respectable. And sure, Allan, there niver was a kinder man than uncle has been to me.

'He'd put me to school if I'd stop; but oh, Allan, even the gulls that fly over the fields seem to tell me to come to sea where my dead father was drowned; and it's to the sea I am going, if I live to be a year older.'

He stopped talking now. Allan too was silent, and both were gazing cloudwards and away over the tremendous forest trees, that seemed to crowd each

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other in their efforts to reach the summits of the very highest hills around.

They clung to the sides of perpendicular rocks and cliffs, those woodland giants; so tall were some, that the cloud-shadows passing lingered a time on their spreading tops, turning them black, while the sunshine on their branchless stems changed them from brown to the rich bronze of cedar.

But these boys were not thinking about the clouds now, nor of the lords of the forest either. Their thoughts were very far away indeed: Allan's were dwelling on lands that he had but recently read of in books kindly lent him by a friend of his, a Scottish minister who lived in a villa among the woods that tower above the Tay; and Rory's were on the sea.

Rory was a very innocent lad, as well as a romantic one, and he had no more idea of how he should join a ship than he had of how he should get on to be Emperor of China. But he was a boy who could do a deal of thinking, especially after going to bed of an evening—without a candle, mind. His uncle was a decent Scottish crofter, and, though by no means penurious, was economical. However, Rory had found it just as easy to think in the darkness as in the daylight. So he had formed a little plan of his own for joining the merchant service, but it is one which he hugged to his own heart, and would not even have told his chum about for a very great deal.

Some people tell us that your day-dreaming boys never make their way in the world. Don't let any one persuade you, reader, that this is true. A day-dreamer is a thinker, and day-dreaming is at least a healthy pastime, from which good may flow. Build your

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castles in the air, if you please, then, until their battlements almost reach the moon; but—but—well, come to think of it, it might be better if one or two of your aerial structures had foundations on the earth. But read as well as dream. Remember what Wordsworth says:

> 'Dreams, books, are each a world; and books we know
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good;
> Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness will grow.'

While the boys were thinking the birds were singing. For oh, it was such a glorious early summer's day! The cushat croodled and moaned in its own soft way, but hardly could its voice be heard for the bickering lilt of the mad, merry chaffinch, and the loud but lovely song of the speckled-breasted mavis. They wanted all the forest to themselves; but when they ceased for a time, then one could hear the low flute-like tones of the blackbird, and the love-notes of the linnet as it perched upon the scented golden furze, or sat swaying to and fro on a spray of yellow-tasselled broom.

But Allan let his elbow and head drop at last grasswards, and there he lay sound and fast asleep. The lad was exhausted from the excitement he had so recently come through, and Rory sat there for a whole hour or more without moving. He would not have awakened his friend for a very great deal indeed.

At last Allan sat up, and, looking around him in a half-dazed kind of way, began to gouge out his eyes with his knuckles, at least so it seemed.

'Hullo, Allan!—Allan, hullo!'

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It was a resonant, manly voice, high up on the pine-clad brae behind them; and presently its owner came bounding downward, leaping from one moss-clad boulder to another, but fain now and then to clutch at a tree-trunk, to check the way he had on him.

'Ah! here you are after all, and your fishing mate, whom I don't think I've had the pleas——that is, whom I have never spoken to yet? How are you, boy?' This to Rory.

There seemed a little condescension in this minister's tone of voice—*noblesse oblige*—perhaps; but Rory smiled his Irish smile, and boldly replied:

'Faix, sorr, I'd be a deal worse if there was anything the matter with me at all at all.'

Ross McLean—for that was the minister's name—smiled and sat down. A fine tall fellow he was, dressed, not in a clerical suit, but in rough tweed knickerbocker suit, with a fishing-rod in his hand. Brown as a gipsy, with yellow beard and moustache; a frank, blue-eyed face, and a pleasant smile that was not ready-made, yet always to hand when wanted.

It will readily be believed, therefore, that he was not the parish minister—Rory's friend. He was about forty years of age now, but had spent about fifteen years of an adventurous life among the wildest kind of savages in the world. He was really Allan's dearest friend, and many a long evening did the boy spend listening to the stories he could tell him, concerning the places he had visited, and the faces he had seen here and there in many lands. Some of these were humorous enough in all conscience, while others were tragic in the extreme, more especially

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stories of the cannibals he had lived amongst, and tried to convert to the Christian religion.

The little villa among the broom, and near to the pine forest high up yonder, was the spot where Ross McLean was always welcome, and Allan's mother herself made one of the most interested listeners, though it must be confessed that she shuddered a little at portions of this bold missionary's story concerning the fearful dangers he had come through.

'I will not proceed, Mrs. Adair, if my narrative hurts you,' he would say.

'Proceed by all means,' she would reply; 'see how eager Allan is to listen.'

'You missionaries,' she added, one evening, 'are the true followers of the Cross, for not only do you teach to the benighted savages the Gospel, but your lives are ever in danger.'

There was nothing very remarkable in any way about Allan's mother. She was the widow of an Indian officer, fragile and gentle, and never tired of doing good to the deserving poor. In this pretty little villa, with its gardens and orchard, she had lived for many years, and told the doctor she hoped to die there.

'Toots, toots, ma'am,' said the rough old surgeon, 'I tell ye straight that death's oot o' the question a'thegither as far as ye're concerned. Dinna haver, 'oman.'

It certainly was not a large company that sat out on Mrs. Adair's daisied lawn that same evening, drinking tea, but a very happy one nevertheless. The eldest was Mrs. Adair herself, then came Ross and his splendid wolf-hound, or Great Dane, of whom

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we shall hear a good deal more as our tale goes on. Then came Allan, and next his sister Aileen. I heard a boy of about Allan's age say the other day that there wasn't much difference in girls about ten. 'They're just as like each other,' he said, 'as plums.' But he had the grace to add that some of them were sugar-plums.

Well, maybe Aileen Adair was one of the sugar-plums—I'm only suggesting this. Tall for her ten short years, as graceful as a willow. Hair like her brother's, only flowing to her waist, an air of wondrous wisdom, with fits of childish fun and play. She was bonnie. You couldn't doubt that; and I think the chief beauty of her face lay in her eyes. They were large, and blue as the rifts you see in the sky on a day when it is covered with piles of cumulus clouds; and the eyelashes were long, very long, and swept her soft cheeks. So she was really an interesting girl to speak to.

The cat was last, but she did not think herself least. Purn, for so was she called, did not join the circle, because that huge drab-coloured Dane dog lay near his master's feet. Purn had never been quite sure of this canine giant. He wouldn't chase her, that is true, and at first, when pussy Purn tried to strike up a friendship with him by rubbing her back against his enormous fore limbs, Vasto did not take the slightest notice of her.

Purn was far from pleased, so she determined one fine summer's day to try Vasto's temper, and, jumping up playfully, smacked his face. Vasto gave a growl that had the sound of a gun fired in the mouth of a cave, and which frightened pussy almost to death.

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He seized the cat by the neck, and she thought her time had come at last. Only he hadn't the slightest intention of killing her; he only meant to put her out of harm's way. And so he did most effectually, for, marching towards the big monkey-tree, he stood on his hind legs, and laid her seven feet high on a branch. Now out of this Purn couldn't move for the terrible prickles that stabbed her whenever she dared to try. She therefore contented herself by mewing most piteously, and at last the neat-handed servant Jeannie got the steps and took her down. Purn ran past Vasto with blazing eyes and her hair on end.

'Wait,' she cried, or seemed to, 'till I grow as big as you, and won't I warm you! Your eyes are drab like your ugly body; I won't leave a drab eye in your head. Ugh! how I hate you!'

Tronso was an Irish terrier—he belonged to Allan; but the cat and he were never absent, and she could do what she pleased with him. Tronso, with his huge teeth, could have killed twenty cats in a minute, but he never lost temper with Purn. So these constituted the family group, on this particular day at all events.

But in a day or two, however, Uncle Jack was coming. The postman brought the letter and the glorious news just as they were sipping their last cups of tea. Allan's enthusiasm was the greatest: he must toss his bonnet in the air, and give vent to a whoop that wild Indians needn't have been ashamed of.

'Whoop! Hurrah! Maybe coming to-morrow. Hurrah! he'll see my otter! Glad I didn't skin it!'

Aileen's eyes only grew a little brighter, if that were possible.

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'Dear Uncle Jack!' she cried. 'Oh, how nice!'

'My sailor brother!' That was all poor Mrs. Adair said.

And she wiped away some foolish tears, whether caused by joy or memories of the past I could not really say.

'I'm sure Captain Jack must be very nice,' remarked Ross, because he did not like to sit silent.

'Why, nice is no name for it!' cried Allan enthusiastically. 'And he can spin you yarns till all is blue.'

'I wouldn't like everything to be blue, Allan.'

Mrs. Adair wiped her glasses once more, and once more took up the letter, and read aloud: 'Yes, dear sister Mary, I'll be with you in a brace o' shakes. Me an' my little black boy, Schnapps. Haven't seen your dear old-fashioned face for four long years. Never mind, Sis, old Jack is old Jack still; a trifle browner maybe, and a grey hair here and there; for, mind you, I'm getting most ridiculously old. Two-and-forty on the day I'll be with you!'

Ross McLean laughed aloud. 'Two-and-forty, eh? Why, I'm nearly that, and don't intend to feel old for five-and-twenty years yet.'

Mrs. Adair smiled, and read on:

'Found several grey hairs lately. Ah, lass! these warn a man that he's wearing on, and that one day—who knows how soon?—he'll be tucked in his last hammock, and slid over the bulwarks, while his bare-headed messmates breathe a prayer, and, maybe, bring the backs of their brown hands athwart their eyes to wipe away a tear.

'But, bless you, sister, don't pipe your eye. I'm

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home for life, and, would you believe it? I'm going to settle down. Made my pile, though it ain't a big one. Now, what do you think I've done? Why, bought a little property by the salt, salt sea. I'm going to make a garden round it, and do all manner of landsman things. And you've got to let your shanty furnished, and come and keep house for poor old Jack.

'You would never believe what kind of a place I've purchased—you'd never guess; and when you see it, why——'

Mrs. Adair read no more just then.

She was interrupted.

'Oh, gin (if) ye please, mistress, there's a strange man wi' a muckle stick in his han' comin' up the loanins, singin' till himself a' the wye (way). I'm sure he's comin' here.'

'It's uncle!' cried Ailie, skipping off like a leveret.

'It's Uncle Jack!' shouted Allan. And off went he next.

The cat bolted up a tree, and the dogs followed the children, barking just because the bairns were happy.

And Uncle Jack it was. Listen to the roll of his manly voice:

'His form was of the manliest beauty,
His heart was warm and soft;
Faithful below he did his duty,
But now he's gone aloft.
But now he's go—o—ne aloft.

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CHAPTER III

THE HOME-COMING OF UNCLE JACK

ENTIRELY one's beau-ideal of an honest, brave British sailor was bold Uncle Jack. I needn't say more, because we all know what a merchant skipper is—the round face, the brown face, the face that is so often full of humour and dimpled o'er with smiles, and the eyes that twinkle when he laughs. The awkward dress, which is partly sea, partly shore style, maybe a tall hat and a pilot jacket, and far more of soft silken necktie than is fashionable. The broad chest and rough visible vest—but bother! never mind, behind that waistcoat there is always the brave, manly, yet kindly, almost childish, heart.

I think we all love Jack. He tossed the children sky-high at the gateway, kissing bonnie Ailie in her descent. Vasto put his two marvellously broad paws on uncle's shoulder, and licked his brow. Off tumbled uncle's hat, and Tronso, picking it up, made a joyous rush across the lawn with it, and gave it to Mrs. Adair, and next minute she was crying on her brother's shoulder.

Uncle Jack welcomed Ross McLean by holding out a hand to him sideways, as tame seals do, you know.

'How d'ye, sir?' he said.

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Then down he sat with a tired 'Heigho!'

'A cup o' tea, did you say, Mary? Aye, that I shall with right good will. A cup o' tea, and maybe ten. Why, I've walked twenty knots if an inch. And what scenery! Would have been here hours ago if I hadn't had to turn and look back so often!

'Why,' he continued, 'what a clinking little place! what pretty flowers, so homely too!'

'And *your* home it must be for a time, anyhow, dear Uncle Jack,' said his sister.

'I'd like, lass, to make it my home for life, Sis, but for one thing.'

'Yes?'

'You're not much troubled with the roar of the sea here, are you?'

'Well, Jack, we have the roar of the wind through the forest. That is almost the same, you know.'

'Yes—well, yes; but you don't get the same effect. Ah! wait, Sissie, till you see my new house. You'll be delighted with it, simply dee—light—ed.'

Uncle Jack had his tea, though not ten cups. Slowly sank the sun in the NNW, for daylight lingers long in bonnie Scotland. The clouds, when at last the sun did go down, and the gloaming came slowly, formed an ever-changing scene such as one seldom sees save in some happy dream. Any attempt to describe it would but end in failure. Yonder were all the colours of the rainbow, but all beautifully confused and diversified—a picture of splendid irregularity.

There was so much to say, however, after Ross McLean had, out of courtesy, taken his departure, that no one thought of retiring. Allan was very wide

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awake indeed, and so was Mrs. Adair now, for she felt very happy. But, sitting on her uncle's knee, Ailie had let her head drop on his broad shoulder, and was sleeping sound and fast. So, too, was Purn, with one of the terrier's paws around her neck.

The red clouds changed to bronze, the bronze to grey; then they somehow disappeared, leaving only a bright orange stripe on the horizon, against which the waving and fantastic pines were darkly silhouetted.

Uncle Jack had his meerschaum pipe, but while talking to his sister he smoked well away from the child's face, for he loved his little niece as only your genuine sailor can love. There would be no night, of course, so all had to retire at last, Uncle Jack carrying Ailie right into the house and up to her own little room. Then saying good-night to all, he departed to seek for rest in his own state-room, as it is styled in the merchant service.

The windows were French style, and opened outwards, and knowing her brother's habits, and his love for fresh air, Mrs. Adair had left them wide. Uncle Jack felt so really tired after beating about all day that he could have turned in 'all standing,' as often, often he did on wild and stormy nights at sea, when he expected to be called every minute. However, he speedily undressed, and, after a few minutes spent in devotion, he got into bed. Now and then the cry of an owl fell on his ear; a huge bat flitted into the room, and awkwardly flew round, examining every corner.

'Not a fly, nor a spider,' said the bat to himself, and out he darted once more into the night.

Nothing else of a disturbing nature was to be

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heard, but there was the soothing murmur of the wind among the pines, though soon that itself seemed to draw farther and farther away, as does the sound of waves on the sea-beach as our barque sails off, and glides away and away towards the watery horizon.

Uncle Jack was in as deep a sleep as ever he had been in his life. And the sun had been blazing high above the rugged mountain-tops, and turning lochs and streams into molten silver, many and many a long hour before the old sailor once more opened his eyes.

Tap, tap, tap at the door.

'Hill—ll—o! Come in, mate. How's her head? What sail's on her?'

'Here she is, uncle!' cried Allan, laughing as he entered the state-room, carrying the great otter by the tail.

'My old boots, lad! Where did you get such a splendid specimen?'

'Shot him, Uncle Jack, yesterday, on a rock, with my revolver. He stole my salmon that stole my Professor Wilson.'

'Why, you *are* a clever boy to shoot!'

'Oh no, uncle, it was only a fluke.'

'Well, may we always have such flukes.'

'I shot off the top of a thistle one day, uncle, at fifty yards.'

'That was excellent!'

'Ah, yes, it would have been, if I'd been firing at the thistle, uncle. But I was trying to hit a pine-tree, five yards to one side of the thistle!'

'Oh, you young rascal! Catch me going out shooting with you.'

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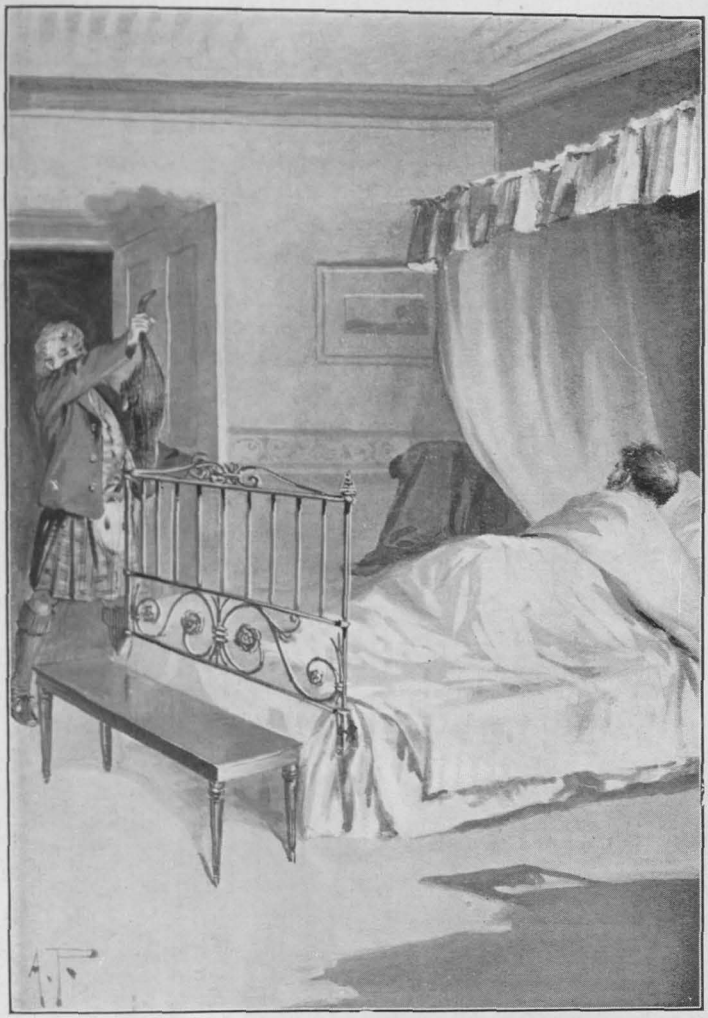

'HERE SHE IS, UNCLE,' CRIED ALLAN.

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'Well, unkie, breakfast will be all ready in twenty minutes—my salmon, and eggs born only this morning, warm out of the nest, and home-brewed——'

'Home-brewed what?'

'Why, home-brewed oat-cakes!'

'Good, but eggs aren't born, are they? and bread isn't brewed, is it?'

'Well, the tea is; and if you like you may have an otter steak. That would eat tender, you know, because they live on salmon and trout.'

. . . . . .

It wasn't for a day or for a week that Uncle Jack stayed at Blue Bell Villa, but for six weeks and over.

He was never tired roaming through the heather or the pine-woods, or fishing in river or burn or loch for trout. He never aspired to salmon. This bold sailor had that best of all health-gifts—a contented mind. No wonder, therefore, he was strong and hardy. He could have given thousands and thousands of sickly city young men points with the bars, or putting up sixty-pound dumb-bells, and beaten them hollow.

Ross McLean very frequently joined uncle and his nephew in their rambles, so right pleasant times they had. They seldom came back to Blue Bell Villa until dinner-time, but they invariably had a capital luncheon at the river-side. The basket Rory always carried, and he constituted himself gillie in every other way, and persisted now in regarding even Allan as his master, instead of, as he used to be, a companion.

Rory O'Flinn was especially happy when Ailie made one of the number. The 'Dougal craytur' in

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the story of *Rob Roy* was not more devoted to Helen McGregor (Rob's wife) than Rory to Allan's sister.

'Why, bless my boots!' said Uncle Jack one evening after dinner, 'do you know how long I've been here?'

'None too long, Brother Jack,' said Mrs. Adair.

'Seven weeks, as sure as I'm a living sailor.'

'Well, just stay seven weeks longer.'

'Nay, nay, Mary. Duty is duty, and I don't want to be thanked for it either. Sailors never are. When I'm not thanked at all, I'm thanked enough. I've done my duty, and I've done no more.'

'That's what Fielding says, dear.'

'And right brave words they are,' Ross put in.

'So now for off south,' continued uncle. 'It will only be a temporary parting, you know. You shall have a little home by the seaside, where you can live as long as you please, and I shall have your company, dear Sis, as long as you care to stay.'

Aileen Adair was looking very sad.

'Oh, you mustn't grieve for old uncle,' said the sailor. 'I believe you'll be just delighted with the house I've bought.

'And listen, Sis, I'm going to furnish the orlop deck myself, and you with your capital female taste shall furnish and decorate the rooms on the upper deck—the ward-room, the state-rooms, and all that sort of thing. As you see, when you let your villa—this pretty morsel of a crow's-nest—furnished, you can pack up all your pretties and fetch them along in your ship's bag and ditty box.'

But the very next morning after this conversation the postman brought a letter for Uncle Jack.

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When he read it he smiled across the breakfast-table.

'Good news! I'll have another week yet of life in forest wilds, as this youngster Allan calls it, before I get up anchor and sail for the south.'

'Is it good news?'

'Good? Rather. I gave my workmen and their master a chart of my—ahem!—my new home and its surroundings. They're good fellows and good workmen, and although they have a master, of course, being all landsmen, I've put my old bo's'n at the head of them all, and it's my old bo's'n who writes. Shall I read a bit?'

'Oh yes!' This in a chorus from all hands.

'DEAR CAP'N,—This coms hoppin' as 'ow you are well, which leaves me enjoyin' the same blessin', bar a badly scratch'd leg. Ye see I went on shore, that is I went down into the town like, from our diggin's on the 'ill, and in comin' back to get aboard again, if I didn't some'ow or odder miss stays and fall down a whole *fleet* o' steps, and scraped the paint all hoff my sta'board leg and stove in my figger-'ead.

'No matter what some folks say, sir, 'cause you knows I was never 'alf-seas over in my life since you knowed me. An' when a sailor lad is workin' 'omewards tack and 'alf tack with a box or two of sardines, some soft tuck, some soft soap, some moist sugar, and two dozen fresh 'errings with honions in 'is bag, I think it ain't fair fight nor British-like to put a whole fleet o' steps right in 'is way to tumble down 'em.

'The goods in the bag got a kind o' bruised and

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mixed, but they did nicely, and when my jib-boom is 'ealed I'll be as pretty as hever once more.

'Now, sir, the men's been gettin' on like a ship on fire, and mostly heverything you laid down in the chart they has been and gone and done. I kept the cat-o'-nine-tails in my pocket for fear o' squalls, but I on'y 'ad to use 'er onct. One lazy lubber wanted to slump off for grog in the midst of the forenoon watch.

'When I tells 'im he mustn't, he lets loose his jawing tackle, then I lets pussy loose, and bless your 'onest 'eart, sir, 'ow 'e did 'oller when I laid her across 'is shoulders. 'E's been a different man since. No trouble with any of the hother 'ands.

'Well, cap'n, the gardens is nicely laid out, the walks laid down and gravelled, the beds and borders harranged, summer 'ouse fitted, and everything planted as could be planted.

'Then inside the ship—no, I means the 'ouse—the decks are down, low and aloft, with a companion ladder to hevery one on 'em as broad's ye please, and out from the ward-room is thrown the sweetest thing in balconies that ever heyes could pictur. All's done but the furnishin' and paintin', 'cause the whole ship's wainscoated inside, and the orlop deck's cemented under, so there ain't no fear o' rats.

'When ye gets the sticks in, and the curtains hup, she'll be the prettiest craft ashore or afloat.

'Howsomesodever, ther is one bit o' advice I makes bold to give you, as old shipmates who 'as sailed together so long, and it's this 'ere. Bar your own dear sister that ye so hoften yarned about when far

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away at sea, and your little niece, never you let a woman get her figger-'ead hinside this craft. If ye does, cap'n, and she looks about 'er just onct, she'll marry ye spite o' your neck.

'No more at present, but remains,

'Your loyal bo's'n,

'SAM GLOVER.

'Posskript.—

'The last touches 'll be put to the craft in a brace o' weeks. God save the Queen. All's well, likewise, Belay!

'S. G.'

Everybody smiled at Sam Glover's letter, and Ailie must come across and take her old seat on uncle's knee.

'I'll have you longer yet,' said the child.

'Why, my dear, you'll have me always till I've got to pipe below. Yes, Sis, I'm just going to anchor for life.

'But I say, minister, just you pray for fine weather for the rest of my time in this forest land of yours, for Allan and Ailie and I here mean to let ourselves rip, I can assure you, just like lads let loose from school.'

And they did let themselves 'rip,' too; for whether Ross McLean prayed for a high thermometer or not, the weather did continue glorious. Colonel Adair had been very much respected in this part of the country, as was his poor widow now, and the lairds all round permitted Uncle Jack and the children to roam over their land as free as mountain hares.

So the next six days constituted all one jolly outing. Both Uncle Jack and Ross were like the

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youngsters and the dogs—in splendid form; and both men unbent considerably towards honest young Irish Rory, after hearing that he had saved Allan's life. This the latter had kept dark, for fear of frightening his mother.

There are not very many of what you might call wild adventures nowadays, even in the Highlands, but if you think of going there I'll tell you of a few you may fall in with, if you encroach too much on lairds' lands, and attempt to go where you please. 1. You may get bitten by an adder. 2. Frightened by a six-feet-long snake. 3. Attacked by antlered deer. 4. Thrown over the fence by a long-horned, towsy-hided, Scotch bull, or the same animal may insert a horn neatly in some portion of your raiment and gallop round a park with you, till every tooth in your head is loosened and your eyes starting out of their sockets. 5. Attacked by a Highland ram, and glad to escape with your life. 6. Tree'd by keepers' dogs, and kept there till starving. 7. Run in finally by the keeper as a poacher, and dragged before the laird, who *may* dismiss you with a caution, but certainly will not ask you to dine. 8. Swamped in a bog up to the armpits, and hauled out by ropes *if* any one happens to pass; if *not*—well, there you are. I myself was thus ensconced for six hours once, and I can assure you that during that time I did quite a deal of thinking.

These are a fair sample of the wild adventures still to be found in Scotia's Mountain Lands. But wait a wee, and wild adventures far more fearful than these will fight their way into this ower-true story.

And the best, or the worst, of it is, that I cannot

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keep them out, having to follow the career of my heroes, where'er on earth it may lead me to.

. . . . . .

When bold and fearless Uncle Jack did go away at last, stick in hand, from Blue Bell Villa, every one, bar Allan, was in tears; Allan just gulped down a great big lump in his throat and said nothing.

'What a difference from a ship!' said Uncle Jack to himself, as the noisy, roaring, tiresome train bore him southward as fast as flying. 'Rattle, rattle, bang, bang!—nothing but din and dust. But the sea! Ah! that indeed! Not a sound save the occasional flapping of canvas, and if before a sturdy ten-knot breeze, hardly even that. No care, no worry, so long's you're off the coast. You do your duty, and you sleep like a log, and there are no cocks crowing in the morning to wake you. Give me the sea, say I.'

Now Uncle Jack, being in a delightful first-class compartment all by himself, thought he would lighten the way with a song. So he trolled forth:

'A life on the ocean wave,
And a home on the rolling deep,
Where the scattered waters rave,
And the winds their revels keep.'

Then—well, after that, the good old sailor fell fast asleep.

'Bless my boots!' he said, when he was awakened at last. 'This can't be London! Why, I haven't been an hour in the train from Edinburgh!'

'It is London, nevertheless, sir,' said the man, smiling.

'Well, well, well, wonders will never cease!'

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He gave the porter, who finally let him out, half a crown.

'Buy tea for the missus with that,' said Uncle Jack.

'Sure to,' said the porter, touching his cap and smiling.

Then, singing to himself, away marched the master-mariner, and when we next see him it will be quite a long way westward and south.

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CHAPTER IV

'THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT'

'THIS is the house that Jack built.' The first line in an old nursery nonsense-rhyme which had great interest for me when I was a wee curly-headed chap about five years of age; but that must be fully ten years ago! How time flies, to be sure!

'This is the house that Jack built.' Never mind, come with me, and I shall show you the house that our Uncle Jack built.

We had better go by 'bike,' I think; it is easier far, and it will cost less. Mount! We have got to whirl ourselves a very long way west indeed, and as it is the sweet summer time, with a bird in every bush, larks singing high in air, and the sward on each side of our pathway carpeted with wild flowers, we need not scorch. Time, they tell us, was made for slaves; and 'Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!'

Well, though the journey was one of ninety miles and over, Uncle Jack determined to walk all the way, and do it in two days easily. He was right glad when he had shaken the dust of London off his feet, and when its roar and din fell no longer on his ears.

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And when he was more than a dozen miles into Surrey he sat down to rest, and pulled out his pipe. The hedges were covered with purple vetches, green-flowered bryony, and roses red and pink. The day was delightful, and a gentle breeze was soughing through the trees overhead. All around were rolling hills of green, well tree'd and cultivated to the top; for Surrey, you must know, is the garden of England, Kent being its kitchen garden, and, maybe, its orchard.

After resting half an hour, uncle trudged on, and at about two knots' distance he found himself at a very old-fashioned inn. There are many of them about, and some may date back a hundred years and more. Uncle Jack had an eye for the quaint, and so he paused, leaning on his stick to have a good look at it before going in.

Many-gabled, though low, it was, with one great oak-tree growing up through the causeway, and seats around. Seats or benches by the flower-bedecked windows, too, on which sat several labouring men enjoying their well-earned rest. Hale and hearty did they look, though, maybe, over sixty.

Uncle Jack nodded to them as he entered, and they saluted the dusty traveller. A neat sanded bar; pewter pots shining, and glasses with a rainbow glint in them, and a neat-handed Phyllis smiling behind.

'What can I get you, sir?' she asked sweetly.

'To tell you the truth, my girl, I'm a trifle tired, terribly hungry, and I'm not sure I ain't thirsty too.'

'Well, sir, I can cure all that if you'll follow me.'

He was shown into a pretty little parlour, with a table well laid out and gay with flowers. Uncle

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rubbed his hands with joy. Cold corned beef, with potatoes and greens, and a pudding to follow—why, it was a dinner fit to set before a king! No wonder Uncle Jack felt like a giant refreshed, or that, with the generosity never absent from the breast of a British sailor, he gave the maid a shilling.

On and on he marched, slept one night at a hotel, and next found himself in the town where his good bo's'n, Sam Glover, 'tumbled down a whole fleet of steps,' an accident which Uncle Jack assured himself might happen to any British tar, and nothing to cry about after all. He did sleep soundly that night.

But next morning he was just as fresh as a mountain trout. And so was good Sam Glover, who met him in the hall, when at last he came out from breakfast.

'Ha, Glover! and how are you, and how's the new house? No more falling down fleets of steps, eh? Sly dog; was there more than one moon in the sky that night?'

Sam touched his hat and laughed simply.

'Well, then,' continued the skipper, 'if you're all ready fore and aft, we'll get under way, Sam, and bear up for the castle.'

The road led up a somewhat steep incline, and from the top a newly-made, fenced and gravelled pathway went winding, still in rather an upward direction, to the new house. It certainly was a queer conceit of this merchant skipper to buy such a place, and turn it into a dwelling-house.

What was it after all? Why, simply an old and disused windmill. It would, when furnished, suit Uncle Jack's every requirement, as we soon shall see.

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Here he could have perfect peace and quiet. Not a sound to disturb him, so far was he from neighbours. No barking dog, no crowing cock.

An owl or two might shout mournfully about the strange dwelling after dark, and in the summer starlight bats would flit about in search of mealy moths. Then by day the strange, weird cry of seagulls could be listened to with delight; but would not their voices, mingling with the boom of the breakers just down yonder under the cliffs, make him believe he was at sea once more, as he closed his eyes in his armchair for an after-dinner nap?

They soon reached the old windmill. It had been built of solid stone a long, long time ago, but was now lime-washed over, till it looked as white as the driven snow.

'Why, here is a garden,' cried Uncle Jack, 'fit for a young princess to wander in—bushes, flowers, and all complete. And won't my sister and my little Ailie be delighted when they clap their eyes on that summer-house, all o'erhung with flowering climbers! I say, Sam, this is wonderful. Had the gardener a magic wand, or did he hire the services of a fairy?'

'There wasn't ne'er a magic wand, as I saw, sir, 'cept a spade or two, an 'oe and a rake, and if you'd 'a seen the gardener's darter, wi' 'er dirty cap and 'er grubby 'ands, you'd 'a said she was just about as unlike a fairy as they makes 'em.'

The mariner wouldn't go indoors until he sat him down in the arbour and smoked a pipe, his eyes being turned towards the blue sea nearly all the time.

'When I get my best glass to bear on the sea out

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yonder, Sam,' he said at last, 'why, if I don't think I can raise the coast of France itself.'

'Shouldn't wonder a bit, sir,' said Sam, who made a point of always agreeing with every word his master said.

'Well, now, bo's'n, we'll go inside.'

Quite an artistic and pretty porch fronted the doorway of this queer square house. This had certainly been a prince among windmills in its time, for the hall the sailors now entered would have been of marvellous dimensions, but for the fact that there had been two state-rooms besides a small kitchen partitioned off it. This was called by the skipper the 'orlop deck.' It was well lighted with a large French window, and wainscotted all round. It was, at present, destitute of furniture, but exceedingly clean, and ready for anything. The state-rooms off here would be for guests, and they were very much larger than any ship's cabin.

The kitchen was not large, because cooking would be all done out of doors, in the galley, as it was to be called, and off this was a bunk for the steward-cook, a very worthy fellow, who had sailed the seas with Uncle Jack for years. There was a very cosy fireplace in the orlop deck, and curtains would be drawn across the doorways. A winding and pretty staircase at one side led to the main deck. And here was the ward-room, large enough to dine a dozen, not that its owner ever contemplated half so many guests.

Off this, again, were no less than three state-rooms—the largest for his sister, the smallest for the maid, and the 'twixt-and-between for sweet little

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Ailie; and Uncle Jack determined that this should be the prettiest and the nattiest in the whole ship.

Uncle Jack had no doubt he could furnish the orlop deck very comfortably and tastefully; but, after a deal of consideration and consultation with Sam Glover, he came to the conclusion that he'd best leave the main deck to his sister's taste.

'An' I think so too, sir,' said Sam. 'Some'ow or huther lady folks does 'ave better taste than men in the dinking up of a droring-room.'

But still another winding stair led to the upper deck of all. This of course was not so large, but bulwarks or battlements had been built all round; and besides this there was a spare cabin in the centre which would make an excellent reading and lounge-room, cool and delightful on a summer's day, and a look-out as well.

Here the skipper had his books, his writing-table, large telescope, and everything complete; and here, moreover, was a small bunk. In fact, the whole place was not unlike the skipper's own room at sea. Uncle Jack often slept up here on suitable nights—that is, when the wind blew high and the waves broke in roaring, booming fury at the foot of the wild rocks far beneath them.

Was Uncle Jack building castles in the air? Well, perhaps; but, come to think of it, don't we all do the selfsame thing from the cradle to the grave, more or less? But, bless my boots! as this dear old sailor would have said, it doesn't do one any harm; on the contrary, so long as we do not neglect our present duties, it does us a great deal of good both mentally and physically To build castles in the air is quite as

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beneficial and recreative as hearing and seeing a good game. The youth or the man of middle age perhaps knows that his desires will never be granted, that the castle he is so busy building has no earthly foundation, because he has begun building it from the top instead of the bottom. Never mind, its very erection has given him pleasure for the time being, and without pleasure what would or could this life be worth?

But there is much to be said for Uncle Jack's Castle of Indolence—that is what he grandly named it, after Thomson's poem, you know. The skipper had had a terribly hard life of it by sea and by land. Oh, if your most ordinary sailor, who has been but little more than a dog-watch[1] at sea, had only the gift to write graphically though but an epitome of all he has seen and done and gone through, what a book it would be! Well, our brave skipper needed rest, and this scheme of his, he believed, would secure it for him.

We shall see. It is said that sailors cannot settle. So far as I am myself concerned, this is to a certain extent true. Had I no work to do on shore, I'd be off to sea in my yacht. As it is, my yacht has to be my beautiful caravan, the Wanderer. But to proceed with my yarn.

Uncle John sat down on the bulwarks of his Castle of Indolence, and had a long, long look seaward. It was a very lovely day. Cliffs and fields and bush —all were green on shore; the waves broke lazily on the beach; a little farther out were great black boulders with long 'sea tangles' floating from them,

[1] The shortest of all the watches kept at sea. There are two: from four till six, and from six till eight.

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so that they looked like the heads of some fearful monsters of the deep, just waiting for their prey. Now and then they seemed to dip those awful heads; but this was an optical delusion, caused by the rolling swell washing over them. Still farther out the ocean was patched with opals, greens, and blacks, but away beyond it was deep and darkly blue, with here and there a cloud-shadow passing over it. Many a sail dotted the azure expanse, and lordly steamers were there, too far out though, for this coast was not considered a safe one.

And the steamers sailed east, and the steamers sailed west, with an easily perceptible motion; but those bound for the south, to real foreign lands—I say real foreign lands because you could almost pitch a ball of spun-yarn to America—did not seem to move, and you could just tell they were steamers from the little balloons of black smoke that hovered over them.

But, besides these, there was many a little sail, both white and brown. The white sails represented those that had gone out for pleasure, or that the crew of land-lubbers might fish, in a half-hearted, amateurish fashion. But the brown-sailed boats—ah! they were in deadly earnest. They were professional fishermen and toilers on the deep. They had wives and families on the green bonnie shores, or in the town, who depended on their success for a living—for meat and clothes at least; and it is but little more that poor fisher-people succeed in obtaining.

Uncle looked at these for a moment or so, then struck into a verse or two of that grand old fisher-song we so seldom hear nowadays, but the very

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music of which represents the motion of a boat at sea. I do not know that I remember the words perfectly, I am but humming it over to myself as I write:

'Oh, weel may the boatie row
That wins the bairnies' bread,
And lightsome be the lot o' a'
That wish the boatie speed.'

But bold Uncle Jack was not the man to sit and dream here all day. He got up presently with a kind of jerk or start, as sailor-men do.

'I say, bo's'n, this won't do, you know.'

'No, sir. Was just a-saying so to myself like.'

'Well, bo's'n, this ship wants to be rigged right away, and found as well. You and I are the working crew at present, so we'll go below and take a look at the orlop deck first.'

'I've got my note-book, and I guess we can soon fix things, right enough.

'There, bless you, Sam Glover,' he continued, 'it isn't a great deal I'll need.'

'No, sir, suttinly not.'

'Well, tumble down with you.'

In a few minutes they were below.

'I like that French window, Sam,' said uncle, with his head a bit to one side. 'In summer we'll have climbers, Sam, at each side; and look what a beautiful view of the sea it gives! Well, in winter, sitting cosily here with, maybe, a friend or two to talk to, I shall almost be able to imagine I hear the spray from the waves dashing against the ports. You know the old love song, bo's'n?'

'Love ain't much in my way, sir.'

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But uncle must sing:

'When the wild wintry winds
Idly rave round our dwelling,
And the roar of the linn
On the night breeze is swelling.
So merrily we'll sing
As the storm rattles o'er us,
Till the dear shieling rings
Wi' the light lilting chorus.'

'A capital voice ye have, sir. As rich and yellow —no, I means mellow—as a ripe tomato!'

But Uncle Jack was writing, and talking to himself.

'Climbers for French window—that's down—sofa in that corner, light and airy, nice table with stu'n'sails port and sta'board to lower or raise 'ccording to size of the company.'

'I thinks they calls 'em wings on shore, sir,' said Sam.

'Yes, Sam, that's it—wings—down it goes.'

'And crimson table-cloth, sir?'

'Ah! yes, yes; mustn't forget that; better have a dozen, Sam.'

'La! no sir, two's enough.'

'Well "chairs" is down—six—and the easy chair.'

'Two of those, cap'n?'

'Can't sit in two, man, at one time.'

'But your friend, sir?'

'To be sure, to be sure; I'd quite forgotten that—ahem! Sam?'

'Sir to you, sir.'

'How would it do to have them all easy chairs?'

'Oh no, no, cap'n; that would look raydeekulous.'

'Well, I daresay you're right—two very easy chairs

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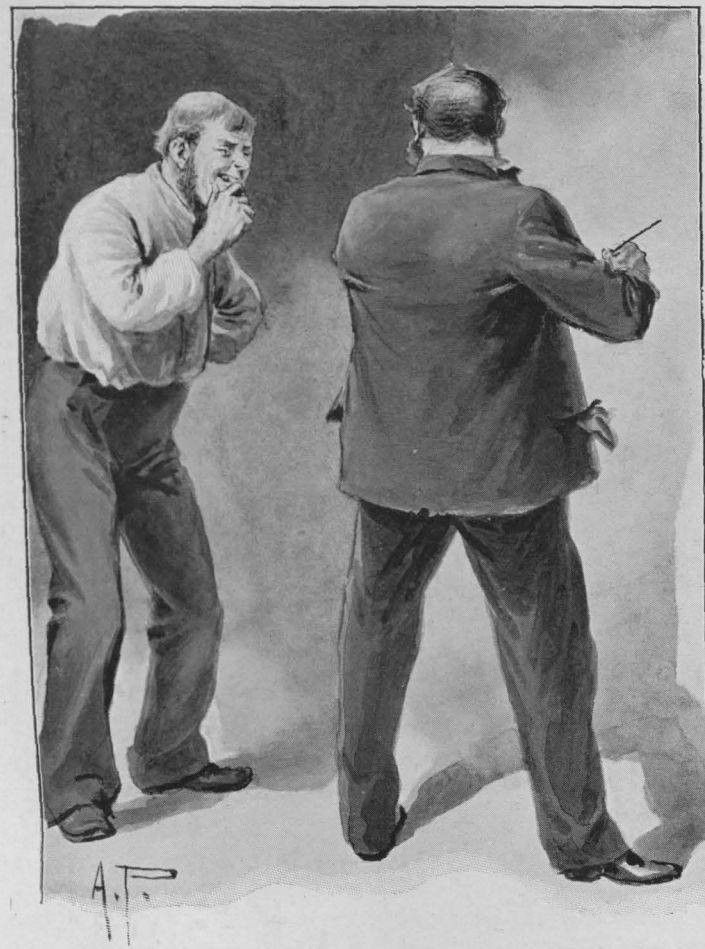

SAM TOOK TO HIMSELF THE LIBERTY OF LAUGHING.

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—that settles that. We couldn't have a four-post bed here, I suppose, Sam?'

Sam took to himself the liberty of laughing.

'Can't see that er-tall, sir. 'Twould spoil the looks o' the room, like. Why, cap'n, you never seed a four-poster on board a ship?'

'No, Sam, no. But look here, Sam, I'm going in for comfort, and——'

'But, sir, you couldn't sleep in the whole of a four-poster—excuse me, won't 'ee, sir?—but ye'd look like a linnet on a hen roost!'

'Graphic, Sam, graphic. But I wasn't thinking of myself a bit. Now just allow your old skipper to have a *leetle* common sense.'

'Suttinly, sir, suttinly.'

'Well, then, supposing that I have my two sailor friends, Captains Barnard and Stunsail, to dine with me. Well, we dine, Sam——'

'Suttinly.'

'Then we chats and yarns till the chronometer—wait a bit, Sam, that must go down——'

'It's a clock, sir, not a crownommater.'

'Certainly, Sam; right for once. Down she is. Now, where was I? This furnishing business is a kind of puzzling, bo's'n.'

'Ye were agoin' to say, sir, what the four-poster was for.'

'Oh yes. Well, we yarn away till, maybe, twelve o'clock. Then it comes on to blow; then I turn to the four-poster, and say: "There's your bed, my dear old friends; strip and get into it. Hark to the pelting of the pitiless storm; you can't go home to-night."'

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'Now, sir,' said Sam, doggedly, 'don't 'ee think me mutinous; but I won't hear o' that ere gloomy four-poster on no account. Hammocks, cap'n, hammocks. A hook here, look, and a hook there, and—there you are, sir.'

'Capital, capital, Sam; down go hammocks. Sam Glover, you must have been born on shore. But look at the beautiful fireplace, and no grate.'

'Oh no, sir; you burns logs and peats on the hearth, you know. That is the annteek, as they calls it.'

Uncle scratched his head, looking tired and puzzled.

'Tell you what it is, Sam, I give it up. I'll—I'll wire for my sister.'

'That's better, cap'n.'

Two minutes after this they were walking briskly back to the hotel. Uncle could sing now; but presently he turned to his bo's'n and said, most gravely and sententiously:

'Tell you what it is, Sam Glover—there are some jobs in this world that sailor men are not cut out for, and house furnishing is one of them.'

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CHAPTER V

LIFE AT CASTLE INDOLENCE

WE have to pay still another visit to Uncle Jack's Castle of Indolence. It is a whole month after, and though late summer winds are blowing through the woods that lie away to the back of the hill on which Jack's romantic house stands, blowing with a harsher, more toughened sound, and although more than one half-gale of wind has sent the white horses careering up Channel, it is at present what is called lovely weather.

The grass on the fields all round is the greenest of the green. Bright is the sunshine, and blue the sea, and we find, to begin with, Uncle Jack himself quietly seated in his arbour, with bonnie Ailie by his side reading a bulky volume that looks uncommonly like the *Boys' Own Paper*. But then this is the way that girls of all ages have! And small blame to them either!

'I don't care very much,' she said, 'for girls' books of adventure!'

It is early in the forenoon. Allan's holidays are on, and he is away out yonder in a cobble, fishing. The old man who rows the boat is terribly like

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a Wanderoo monkey, his face appearing from out a perfect circle of snow-white hair. A pleasant enough fellow, for all that, and as brave as most fishermen are; and all that I ever met were as plucky and fearless as the old Norse Vikings.

Uncle Jack has been reading the morning paper, and smoking a long clay, with a cup of coffee before him to clear his brain. He feels strong, healthy, and happy as an Arctic day is long.

Well, but we quietly enter the porch, and tap with the pretty little brass knocker. We do so gently, as if afraid to break the delightful spell of silence that reigns everywhere around. Jeannie herself, Mrs. Adair's maid from Blue Bell Cottage in the wild Highlands, opens the door to us.

What a change! Why, what a good thing it was that Uncle Jack gave up his furnishing craze and left all to his sister! She had managed to get a tenant for her villa at once, and, packing up her nick-nacks and valuables, had come through with the children in less than a week.

Honest, hardy Ross McLean, the missionary, would have accompanied her as escort, but she would not hear of it. She was a soldier's daughter, and never afraid to travel by herself. In due time she had arrived, and taken up her quarters at the Royal Pennant Hotel.

And what do you think she had done first? Why, sent her brother straight away to London on a ten days' holiday. The truth is, she desired to have a free hand. And two days before he had returned the whole transformation scene was complete. The outside of the Castle of Indolence was just the same;

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but lo! when uncle got inside, on the orlop deck, and looked up and down and all around him, he scratched his head and marvelled.

'Bless my old sea-boots!' he said; 'what a trans-mugrification! Why, bo's'n, women are really useful in some ways, after all.'

'Well, I should think they be, cap'n. Now, I can darn and sew a bit athout the thimble; but just see my ole mother, sir. She——'

'Hush, Sam, hush! I don't want to hear a word about your old mother till I'm done admiring my—my "real estate."'

And really we—you and I, reader—can't help admiring it either.

All is quaint, but comfortable, on the orlop deck below. The table is strong, but a beauty; sofa quite in keeping; curtains charming; carpet and floor-staining sombre, but matching with everything; brass stair-rails shining like gold; French window curtains most tasteful and quiet; a tiny piano and guitar—for, young as she was, Ailie was an excellent performer on both; a great wood and coal fire on the beautiful hearth; flowers everywhere, with brackets and mirrors, and the walls a well-chosen, though not over-crowded, picture-gallery.

Now, whisper please, Uncle Jack would have hung those very walls with engravings of old ships at sea, scraps from *Punch*, with a variety of wonderful highly-coloured illustrations from the big weeklies! All the chairs, sofa, and ottoman were not arranged in a row with their backs to the wall, as the poor sailor would have put them; they were positioned *secundum artem.*

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But we climb upstairs to the ward-room, which, although a dining-room, shows no table in the centre during the day. When I say it looks—although different in shape—a perfect ladies' drawing-room and boudoir combined, this may give you some notion of it.

The broad balcony, with its pretty railings and curtained roof, had been made the most of. Flowers and palms and trailing greenery are here, and still there was room for chairs and books, and a little table with Mrs. Adair's own mandoline. All can be removed in a few minutes if—Uncle Jack says, after studying his Fitzroy on the orlop deck—it is coming on to blow biggish guns, especially if his forecast is backed up by Sam Glover. Mrs. Adair is quietly knitting in the balcony even now, and very happy she looks.

Up the next staircase, and we are in what may be called the skipper's *sanctum sanctorum*. In this cabin his table is all in trim. Here is his easy, editorial-looking chair; his log-book; his huge telescopes to rake the seas withal; a rack for books, a lounge, and a pretty binnacle, compass, lamp, and all complete, to say nothing of a little library of fiction and the weekly papers.

A flagstaff stands here too, and out on the gentle breeze floats the bonnie red ensign of the Mercantile Marine.

. . . . . .

'I'm a happy old bird, I am,' he told his sister more than once. 'No, I'll never go to sea again. Not that I don't love it, Mary, but I'm tired; I need rest at my time of life.'

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'Yes, dear; forty-something is a very advanced age,' said his sister, smiling.

'Forty fiddlesticks, Mary; I'm not giving myself airs about my age, but I know precisely the side of the biscuit that the butter's on. Besides, there's yourself, Sissie, and—well, I know how to appreciate all your goodness.'

. . . . . .

As we go slowly back towards the old-fashioned town that nestles down beneath, and to which the sea sings so sweetly by night, and eke by day, one cannot help taking a longing, lingering look behind at the Castle of Indolence, and, naturally enough, Thomson's lines float in my memory as I do so:

'A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer-sky:
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance, or unrest,
Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest.'

. . . . . .

Summer and autumn wore away, and winter, often wild enough, was ushered in; but although the ship —as uncle often called his strange home—seemed at times to rock with the violence of the tempest, its inmates were happy enough.

'Dry day or wet day,
In wind or storm, hail or rain,'

Allan always went to school, but really, strong Scottish boy though he was, he was often nearly lifted off his legs with the force of the gale.

When Christmas holidays came round he even

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went out fishing, or fished from the rocks, and seldom did he come up home without a good bag. And more than once were he and the old man Muggins nearly blown out to sea, but got inshore and into shelter again with merely the trifling inconvenience of wet jackets.

Allan Adair was good to old man Muggins, and though he was paid for rowing him, always, after a wetting, the boy led the way to a Temperance Hotel, as it was grandly called, and treated all his crew—old man Muggins—to a basin of tea with mountains of bread and butter, and just a pipe or two.

Allan kept up constant correspondence with his Highland home, with poor Rory O'Flynn, and the bold missionary, Ross McLean; and their letters were always given to Ailie and mamma to read. Rory's caligraphy was a trifle indistinct, but he wrote precisely as he spoke. Here is an extract from one, with the spelling somewhat altered:

'Faix! Allan, me boy, it's the farmer himself that is good to this poor motherless child. And it is me that would be the sinner entoirely if I didn't look after the cows and the sheepies for him, tho' oftentimes, Allan, in the frost, when I'm plucking up the turnips, it's the handle av the pluck that'll be freezing to my blue hands. But it's the big shame I should be mentioning such a thrifle at all at all. But, och! Allan, it's many and many a time I think and drame about you, and the happy days yourself and me spent in the woods, and fishin' by the sthrame. Ay, and I think and drame about your sisther, too. Tell her that it's only a poor Irish boy dares—and faix! it isn't much an Irish lad wouldn't dare. She is as far

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above me as the sun is above the moon; but maybe the moon looks at the sun for all that.

'What's to become of me at all, Allan, me friend? You say that you're goin' to travel—och! thin I may niver see ye or hear av you more. 'Cause I'm going to sea myself. My uncle says it's all nonsense whin there's plenty of turnips to hoe and oceans of corn to sow. He says it's only the romance—what's that, Allan?—and the nonsense my flute puts into me. But the sea is always in my thoughts, flute or no flute, and the good minister Ross McLean av coorse gave me another book, and it's made me long for the sea more and more. An' sure, why not? Wasn't my father a sailor before me, poor drowned dead soul! Faix, my flute makes me cry when I think av him.

'And now I must stop, for my uncle is a-calling of me, and there's duty to do, and the dear parson tells me there's nothing more sacred than that.'

. . . . . .

Just a few words more concerning the winter life at the Castle of Indolence, and the scene must change. Uncle Jack, then, had become acquainted long ago with two real old tars ever so much older than himself—worthy old Barnard and Stunsail. They were bachelors both, and had concluded that they had better live together at Wychcombe Towers. A very high-sounding name, yet it was only a superior kind of lodging-house after all. They paid a good price for their pretty drawing-room and handsome bedrooms, with a trifle over perhaps for the sea view and excellent attendance, good table and home comforts. They did not mind that a bit, because care never

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crossed their hawse, and they were free to walk, lounge, smoke, and yarn, and do altogether just as they pleased.

Uncle Jack had been first mate under one of them, when he was a bit younger, so they had plenty to speak about when they visited this Castle of Indolence, which they frequently did to dine and to spend the evening.

Very jolly and delightful evenings they were, too, and much enjoyed by Allan; for these two old men had an apparently inexhaustible fund of sailors' stories to tell, that the boy and even Ailie were neved tired of listening to. Mrs. Adair used to be there also, as in duty bound; nor did she object to the long clays these jolly old sailors smoked, and with the sharp ends of which they used laughingly to poke each other in the ribs when they wished 'to point a moral or adorn a tale.'

Somehow this orlop deck was quite a sounding-box of a place, in which one fiddle sounded like two. Captain Barnard it was who played that one fiddle, and charmingly, too, while mother—as both sailors called Mrs. Adair—accompanied him on mandoline or piano.

The lady sang well, too, sweet, tender old love ditties, some very sad, though; so that it was quite a change, if not a relief, when either uncle himself or one of his friends gave a song that had the odour of the briny sea about it, the pathos and cadence of the ocean waves.

But there were days when the seagulls crowded inland, and fed with the rooks in their fields; days when the glass went tumbling down, and threatening

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clouds like giants' heads banked up to windward. Then uncle would smile, and say to himself, 'If my old pals come up to-night, there will be no getting out of harbour for them till the morning light.' Strangely enough, on such nights as these the old salts were sure to arrive. But the wind, howling and shrieking around the castle, only seemed to make them all the more cheerful as they made part of the circle around the blazing fire.

Every now and again one would pause and hold up a finger, as the storm increased in violence, and yelled and shrieked like winter wolves on the far-off snows of Siberia.

'Listen! Does that remind you, Tom, of that fearful storm when we rounded Cape Hatteras? Lee-shore, half-moon that gave an uncertain glimmer in the cloud rifts once in a minute or so; and don't you remember how high the snow-white foam dashed up the black rock's side that night; how the waves roared like a ship-load of lions; and how we were so close to the terrible headland at last, that we could have pitched a biscuit on to the nearest rock?'

'Ah! matie, I do—and the sails mostly in tatters, rattling like platoon firing in the gale, and the men hanging on to anything as the seas broke over us. Surely not a soul was there in that ship that was not praying; yet no one expected to round that Cape.'

'Blessed be His name, though, Tom, that we did, and reached dear England safe and sound! But now, Uncle Jack, I think it is just time we were going down-hill. It's an awful night, but we'll fetch port all right.'

Uncle laughed.

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'We're all going down-hill, maybe,' he said; 'but I'm skipper of this craft, and my orders are that nobody leaves her to-night. Yonder we will hang your hammocks, and when you've smoked another pipe and yarned a bit more I'll pipe down.'

And so it had always turned out, as Uncle Jack had told himself, and the two old salts stayed in Castle Indolence. Then uncle had the pleasure of their company to breakfast, after which they all strolled away to look at the beach, accompanied by Allan and the daft Irish terrier. Pussy Purn went after him to the door, and gave him a whack, by way of keeping him good.

The beach, one day, was strewn with wreckage, and it was evident enough that a catastrophe had occurred. Fishermen were all very busy about, among them old man Muggins.

'It's a schooner from Cork,' he said, 'and it be's very unlike a soul is left alive to tell o' what happened.'

Now, one would have thought that hearing almost nightly such strange wild stories of the sea, and seeing proofs of its awful might, like those which now lay before them, Allan Adair would not have cared to venture to sea or to foreign lands. But the yarns the old salts spun weren't all sad—many were rollicksome and frolicsome in the extreme.

No matter, Allan had traveller's blood in his veins, and see the world he meant to, and felt sure he would eventually gain his mother's permission.

Well, no boy can live without amusement and recreation, and no boy should try. But Allan got plenty even here. He got in tow with many fisher-

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men and old sailors, who swarmed in this town like lobsters in a rock-girt pool, and they were rather pleased than otherwise to spin yarns for the handsome, eager-eyed boy.

Then, when he had a day off, he spent it in the cobble or among the rocks, and so became an expert in the gentle art, as somebody calls fishing.

Well, winter wore away at last, the trees began to bud and birds began to sing. Softly now blew the western winds, and in every woodland and dell sweet sprang the wild flowers to welcome the honey-bees. Then, one day, Allan had a letter; for Ross McLean, the missionary, wrote to tell him that he was coming through.

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CHAPTER VI

ONLY THE WAIL OF THE WIND

ROSS McLEAN'S arrival at the Castle of Indolence was the signal of general rejoicing. He had the marvellous gift of pleasing everybody, and making everybody happy and contented with his lot in life. No long-faced death's-head he, with voice lugubrious, and a mantle of gloom for ever over his shoulders. He made people laugh whether they would or not, and this, too, without the slightest effort or wish on his part.

These gifts which McLean possessed were doubtless the secret of his success among savages. For, as a missionary, seldom did he go armed otherwise than with the Book of books—his Bible. As a class, missionaries are as brave as our best soldiers. But are they not soldiers too—soldiers of the Cross of Christ?

McLean said he meant to stay just a week at the castle, for his health's sake. Uncle Jack laughed.

'Health, indeed!' he cried; 'why, you're as hard and brown as a Norway or Peterhead fisherman. No, Ross, you'll stay for our pleasure and for your own, until I give you your passport. And don't forget, either, that the passport has to be signed by my sister yonder, by Allan, and little Ailie, too.'

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'Then I'm a prisoner?'

'*En parole*, yes.'

Allan, in consequence of this visit, had a holiday—for his health, let us say; and, though not neglecting many a fishing trip, accompanied now by the two dogs and Ailie also, they had to hire old man Muggins's boat; they took many a long, delightful picnic, too, to distant streams, to the woods, and to every beautiful spot they could find, including a wild hobgoblin sort of moor extending some miles into the interior.

The road was so rough that at times Ross had to carry Ailie on his broad shoulders. Tronso and Vasto had glorious fun, on the moor, at sea, or anywhere else. Of course the scenery was nothing to be compared in grandeur with that of the wild romantic Tay. But everybody was happy.

When about five hundred yards from shore and returning, the two dogs had a bit of play that they never failed once to put on the stage.

Tronso would be at the bows, when, suddenly, he seemed to miss his foothold. Anyhow, overboard he tumbled, and next moment, with a cry of grief, which was all put on, Vasto sprang after him. Now, as a rule, Great Dane dogs are not remarkable for their swimming powers; but Vasto was quite a water-witch.

Then Tronso, who could swim equally well, would pretend to be drowning, and glad enough he seemed to be to scramble on Vasto's strong back. After this the boarhound came alongside, and both got hauled up. When they shook themselves, it didn't improve the dresses of any one on board. But a feed of luncheon-biscuits was sure to follow, and this induced them to enact the same queer drama another day.

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Dogs are a strange study, and, mind you, reader, I am writing facts at present, and not fiction.

. . . . . .

One night Uncle Jack set out a little before sunset to meet his two sailor friends, who were to dine, spend the evening, and sleep at the castle.

For it was going to be a dirty night.

All three knew this from the lurid sunset, and the rising wind that blew every now and then in short, uncertain squalls.

'The glass is tumbling down,' said uncle.

'A lee shore, too,' said Tom Stunsail.

Barnard only shook his head as he looked southward over the sea, where the white horses were already beginning to toss their manes.

'God save all at sea!' from Uncle Jack.

'Amen!' said the others, and one bowed himself.

As the evening passed by, wilder and wilder blew the storm. It roared and howled around the old windmill, and it is needless to say that the talk tonight and the yarns spun were nearly all about the dangers of the deep.

Uncle Jack sang the *Bay of Biscay*, and the howthering storm made a terrible bass. McLean sang that charming song beginning—

'O pilot! 'tis a fearful night,
There's danger on the deep;
I'll stay and tread the deck with thee;
Alas! I cannot sleep.'

But this would not do, thought Mrs. Adair; so she sat herself down by the piano, and after playing some very beautiful operatic airs, she raised her voice, and

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her rendering of *Afton Water* was sweet to pathos, but not gloomy.

'Flow gently, sweet Afton, amang thy green braes;
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, disturb not the peace of her dream.'

This is but a specimen of one of the most charming love ditties ever Burns penned. Just one verse more:

'Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flow'rets she stems thy clear wave.'

Ross was entranced, and so, too, was young Allan, for the music brought the whole scene and scenery up before their eyes. The braes so green, the waving woods, the wimpling stream, the wee, whitewashed cottage, and Mary in the current with her lap half-filled with wild flowers—water-lilies and forget-me-nots.

'Dear sister,' said Uncle Jack, 'you have taught us a lesson. It is sinful to be melancholy. Sit nearer to the fire, boys.

'"We've trusted aye to Providence,
And so will we yet."'

As was his wont, uncle was up next morning almost as soon as the sun, and on looking seaward the first thing that attracted his attention was a barque, far out, but with tattered sails and shivered masts, drifting shorewards without apparently a hand to guide her. Uncle Jack ran aloft to view her through his glass; and as she wallowed here and wallowed there, he could see a female form on board waving something white to attract attention. He met Allan as he came below again.

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'Oh, Allan,' he cried, 'that vessel will be beached and smashed to atoms, and the poor creature will be drowned before our eyes!'

The storm, I should mention, had almost gone down; the waves, however, were mighty rollers, and the breakers on the beach houses high. Solemn was their boom, as if they tolled a requiem for the dead!

'Can we not find the lifeboat?'

'No, uncle; she left last night for B——.'

'That is terrible! Then all is lost!'

'Uncle,' cried Allan Adair, boldly, though a little excitedly, 'let us run down to town and see old man Muggins. He will advise us. Come.'

Uncle Jack needed no second bidding, and they were quickly down the hill and near to the hut at the harbour's mouth, where Muggins lived.

They speedily told their errand and asked his advice. He stood rubbing his chin for a minute—then:

'I'll do it—yes, if you'll come and take the tiller and an oar, I'll go.'

'*We'll* go, Muggins,' cried uncle, 'right enough.'

'The long boat?' asked Allan.

'No, lad; the cobble—she's broad-beamed, and will float where the other would turn turtle.'

'Now, lads,' he said, 'if you're a bit nervous, don't ye come. It is ten to one 'gainst our ever gettin' back. But it seems duty like.'

'It is to save life,' said Uncle Jack. 'Launch the boat, and God be with us!'

'You're mad!' shouted some of the bystanders.

'We shouldn't let 'em go, Bill,' said one more quietly.

But the sturdy little boat was launched. Uncle

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Jack, with the nimbleness of a man-o'-war's man, took one oar, Muggins the other, Allan seized the tiller, and away they went straight for the harbour's mouth. The people ran along the wall cheering them now, for none appreciate pluck more than do the British.

Misfortune soon began, however, for a huge wave broke right in her teeth, and the cobble was nearly swamped. Women shrieked on shore, and white-haired men knelt down to pray.

'Out with the balers,' cried old man Muggins, 'and work like bricks!'

And so they did. Perhaps Uncle Jack had never before worked harder in his eventful life, and I am certain that Allan had not.

Muggins with an oar did his best to keep her head to the rollers, and so high were some of these that when her bows were lifted the water from the boat splashed over the stern, and uncle felt sure she would go down. But at last she was lightened and clear.

'Cheerily does it now, men!' cried uncle. 'A long pull and a strong pull.'

It needed a strong pull indeed, for every few minutes the wind increased to a squall. No one spoke till they had reached far out to sea. And now it was time to keep her away. Rowing was somewhat easier after this, but there was greater danger of broaching-to and getting upset.

'Hurrah!' cried Allan at last; 'yonder she is—a good half-mile from the beach.'

'Is she rolling much, Master Allan?'

'Fearfully!'

'Then Heaven help us! I know not if we will get aboard.'

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At the risk of his life Uncle Jack stood up to view the situation.

'We had better get farther out, and then sweep down upon her. Pooped we may be, but it's our only chance.'

The wretched woman on board saw the boat, saw their danger too, clasped her hands, and prayed aloud for their safety. And a voice came down the wind, 'Stand by with a rope!'

Then a few moments of extreme peril! Would the frail cobble be dashed into splinters or stove by the reeling wreck? As it happened, the barque was just then turning her stern shorewards, and the cobble, splendidly steered by young Allan, swept down at the port side. Uncle stood at the bows to catch the rope that next minute was ably pitched. The oars had been shipped.

'Up you shin, old man! Nimbly is the word!'

Muggins laid down the boat-hook and was quickly on board. Allan followed more actively. Uncle Jack took a turn of the rope round a thwart, spat in his hands, and in less than a minute stood beside his comrades. Not a moment too soon, for the boat was almost immediately after sunk with a sway of the ship.

It had never occurred to any of these brave fellows that the schooner's rudder might be damaged or the wheel smashed. Luckily, all was right in this respect.

There was no time now to say a word to the lady. A little sail must be got on her somehow, and a bit of a jib rigged, just enough to steer by. This was done, and right merrily too. But the wind had gone

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THE WRETCHED WOMAN ON BOARD SAW THE BOAT.

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more round to the west, and the vessel was perilously near the sands.

The good people thereon saw their danger, and frantically waved them off. Old man Muggins flew to the wheel and got her round in time.

'There is nothing else for it!' he cried. 'We'll stick her among the rocks, I know the very spot.'

What a splendid fellow he looked, so broad-chested and brown! What though his hair was grey! Yonder stood an English sailor, English blood in his veins, English pluck in his heart!

Half a mile eastward! Oh! if the morsels of sail should carry away now! Only seventy yards from the terrible black rocks!

'Hold on now, all hands!' cried Muggins at last. 'Hold on for dear life!'

Round came the barque, and went sweeping cliffwards, apparently to death and destruction. Next half-minute she was beached, but almost high and dry, and on an even keel, her sides firmly wedged between two rocks.

Old man Muggins came forward now, and all shook hands.

'Such a narrow shave, ye know, gintlemen, I niver 'sperienced afore! Wonder if there's ere a drop o' drink in the ship's canteen?'

'I'll run and see,' said Allan.

Allan quickly reached the companion aft, leaping over the wreckage like a goat. Down below into the cabin, and there was the woman weeping over a little swing cot, in which a sleeping baby lay. Her story was a sad one.

Caught in the awful gale, and broached-to for a

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time, she was below, and the vessel battened down. Then a minute or two of deep darkness and silence. The ship was engulfed, and when she recovered, with her swept decks, no human voice was to be heard, only the wail of the wind and the roar of the waves.

Then this poor soul, who was the captain's wife, knew all were lost. She was

> 'All, all alone,
> Alone on the wide, wide sea.'

That day was a busy one with the brave fishermen, for it took more than ordinary skill to land the lady and her baby up the cliff, and to shore up the ship when the tide went back. And there was much business to be done, and telegrams to be sent to the vessel's London owners, before either Allan or Uncle Jack would leave the barque.

But they were drawn to bank at last, to receive the congratulations of a thousand men at least, to say nothing of the women; and these latter would not be satisfied until they had shouldered Allan, and carried him sky-high into the town. Allan did not half like it.

Old man Muggins had the honour of dining at Castle Indolence that night. He was rather shy, and not much at home with a knife and fork, but he got marvellously happy as the night flew on, and spun his yarn and sung his song with the rest of them.

Muggins had been in the Royal Navy for ten long years, and it is no wonder, therefore, that Sam Glover, who had also seen service under the white ensign, completed a friendship with him that was not dissolved till death.

The Lass of Lancs, as the barque was called, got

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safely off the rocks, and was towed to London, the men on board pumping three hours out of every watch. Muggins and Allan went with her, and received the thanks of the owners and a bag of gold each.

This was the boy's first real adventure in life. I am not boasting of him, but brave he was. I do not boast about him, because I feel certain there are 999 lads in the thousand on our southern shores who know something about the sea, and who would have done precisely the same as he did.

But when, one day, a short time after this, a big mysterious-looking foolscap letter arrived, addressed to

MASTER ALLAN ADAIR,

the boy's wonderment knew no bounds. He had overtaken the smart postman a little way down-hill when returning from bathing off the rocks, with Tronso by his side, and his towel over his shoulder.

'That's for you,' said Postie, handing him the document. 'Hope it contains good news.'

Allan thanked Postie, took the letter, and trotted off with it to an adjoining wood.

'I'll have the first read of it, anyhow,' he said. 'I wonder whatever it can be? Well, there's the London postmark right enough. And what is this stamped on the back—"Foreign Steam and Sailing Co., Fenchurch Street"?'

But his suspense was too great to suffer longer dalliance.

The letter was typewritten and brief, the gist of it being as follows:

'SIR,—The Company do not think that they have sufficiently thanked you for your assistance in the

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gallant rescue of their vessel; and hearing that you have a desire to go to sea, offer you a free passage in the Livingstone, clearing out in two months' time. They desire me to inform you that you would, on acceptance, be rated as midshipman or apprentice, but without premium; and, furthermore, that on your return to London you would be free to leave us, or remain and take your chance of promotion, which I need hardly say would be a good one.

'I am, sir,

'Your obedient servant,

'HENRY BULKELEY,

'Sec.'

I must leave the reader to imagine for himself what the lad's feelings were at the present moment. He read the letter three times, then stowed it away in the inside pocket of his jacket. Poor Tronso was sitting by his feet looking pitifully up into his face and wondering what had happened, for dogs know a deal more than we give them credit for. But Allan touched his knee, and up sprang the doggie to receive kiss and caress.

'You'll go too, Tronso. Don't imagine I'm going to leave such a dear, faithful friend behind.'

And then a sudden expression spread over his face.

'I wonder, will mother let me go? Anyhow, I'm off to see Uncle Jack, and then there is the minister, Ross McLean. He'll speak up for me. Hurrah! doggie, we'll manage mother between us.' And off he scampered to the old windmill, with Tronso joyfully circling round him, and scaring both rooks and seagulls with his excited barking.

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CHAPTER VII

HE OPENED HIS EYES IN A STRANGE ROOM

'MANAGING mother' was not such an easy job after all. Allan was her only son, and so like his dear, dead father. Oh, she would break her heart if he went away!

It was for the lad's good, said everybody. He was cut out for a career, and pity indeed it would be to stand in his way. 'He might be something far worse than an honest sailor,' Uncle Jack said. Then she had not only to withstand all the arguments of the two old salts and Ross, but the pleadings of the boy himself. Such psychic force could not well be resisted, so she just dried her tears, and gave up the battle with honour.

'Well, well, brother,' she said, 'if it's the Lord's will, I will say nothing more.'

Then Allan must jump up and give her one of his boyish, almost bear-like hugs.

It was all arranged.

Then ensued a busy time. Allan must be got ready. Uncle Jack, who was never averse to taking a little holiday in London, went up to town, Allan and Ross being with him. They would buy his sea-chest after seeing the Company, see the ship, and in fact do

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everything that might be necessary. But they did a deal more. They were just like three boys home from school, and Allan had never had such fine times of it in all his short existence before.

Allan had written post-haste to his friend Rory, telling him all his good luck, and how he would have liked to run down, if only for a day, to renew the joys of his youth (the boy was only fifteen now). But, he added, he would never forget them, his Highland home nor Rory. He received quite a characteristic letter from his friend a few days after; but, strangely enough, there were in it no expressions of regret at Allan's going away.

And now, as the historian of these young heroes of mine, it is my duty to explain why such expressions were absent from Rory's letter.

'I'm going to the say, sure enough,' said Rory to his uncle, the very next day after he received Allan's letter, 'and nothing can stay me floight, uncle.'

'A-weel, laddie, I'll be gey sorry to pairt wi' ye, for ye've been a good boy to me, but I'll no say ye nay; though dod! I'll warrunt ye'll be glad eneuch to get back to the auld fairm again.'

'Faix! uncle, it's sorry I am to lave ye, but there's a something in me heart that tells me I'm bound to be a sailor.'

'Weel, laddie, ye've good claes and shoon, and I've just thirty shillin' and my blessin'. If that'll help ye to work your wye sooth, gang, and God be wi' ye! When ye're tired flyin' over the face o' the deep, and find no rest for the sole o' your feet, come hame, and you'll be welcome!'

. . . . . .

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About a week after this, when the steamer from Leith landed her passengers at Hull, one of them, carrying a tiny morsel of a grip-sack in his hand, was Rory O'Flinn. That bit of a bag contained all the boy's worldly wealth. Fain indeed would he have gone on to London by boat, but he could not afford such an expense. He must walk all the way to Southampton, from which the Livingstone would sail—he knew the day and date—and at the very least he could see dear Allan, as he called him, and bid him a long farewell.

Youth is a glorious time, and in its bright lexicon, as the poet tells us, there should be no such word as fail. The passage of the steamer Queen from Leith had been a stormy one and a long one, but it had made Rory almost 'sea-fast.' He felt giddy, however, on going on shore. The houses seemed to rock and swim before his eyes, so he determined to get away out of the noisy bustling city at once, and ask the way to London.

But he was hungry now, and as he still possessed twenty-one shillings of the cash his uncle had so kindly given him, he boldly entered an eating-house and enjoyed a splendid breakfast of coffee, bread and butter, and dried haddocks. It amused him to hear the waiter call him 'Sir'—the 'poor Oirish boy' who was going to tramp all the way to London with nothing in his pocket but a pound and a flute!

He was full of hope, however, and that was the best of it. He trudged on a good many miles, and then sat down to rest. He fell sound asleep. But what a deal of good that bit of a snooze did him! He lay down giddy, tired, and weary—he awoke a strong young Irish giant. After a drink of water from a little

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wayside well he started off once more. He knew he was on the main road and steering south, but that was all.

His boots, a good pair, he had taken off, and cramming his socks inside slung them over his shoulder. He possessed a strong double-bladed knife, a present from Ross McLean, and with this he cut a capital blackthorn stick. Rory was a splendid 'flautist,' not only in jigs, but in old Irish melodies that would have brought the tears to your eyes, had you listened.

The road seemed long and dull. He met carts and traps, but no pedestrian for half an hour at least. Then a figure in black clothes hove in sight. He was a clergyman, short-sighted and reading a book. He could not have heard the barefooted boy's approach, for he quite started when Rory addressed him:

'It's beggin' your riverence's pardon I am, sorr, but could ye tell me how many moiles it is to the town of London?'

'Why, you don't mean to say, boy, you're going to walk there!'

'Iviry foot, for sure.'

'Why, it's nearly a hundred and eighty miles.'

'I did more'n that before, sorr, in Oireland. I'm going on to Southampton next, and maybe to the say, to seek my fortune.'

'Better stay at home, lad. What can you do?'

'This. Listen, sorr, if you plaze, yer riverence.'

Rory quickly put his flute in joint. He looked at the clergyman for a moment.

'It isn't dancin' you'd like to be, I suppose, sorr, so I'll play ye my drowned father's favourite.'

He played *The Wearing of the Green*, and so

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softly and sweetly that it seemed as if a blackbird in the neighbouring hedge became mute to listen.

'Very beautiful, boy, very beautiful indeed! Well, I won't detain you. Here is a shilling and my blessing. Take care of yourself in London.'

'And is all this shilling for me, and your blessin' besides?'

'Certainly, boy, if it is any good to you.'

'Och! look, your riverence. I'll have a hole bored in it, and I'll hang it round my neck, and never part with it in loife.'

There were tears in Rory's eyes when he trudged on again. Soon he came to a village, then to another, and at both he played light music to groups of children. Only a few coppers from women-folk constituted his reward. But he played old Irish melodies at villas, and for the second time that day he saw silver —no less than four threepenny-bits. One was brought him by a beautiful little girl, so like Aileen that he lingered to look at her.

One lady invited him into the back kitchen, and gave him—a temperance tract! A little way down another lady bade him wait a minute and she would bring him something nice.

'Och! if ye plaze, missus, I've got one already.'

'One what?'

'A temperance tract, for playin', ma'am.'

The lady laughed. 'I'll get you something more to the purpose. A splendid piece of cake and a basin of milk.'

'Thank ye kindly,' he said, and went quietly away.

'May I play for me supper and bed?' said Rory that same evening, when he arrived footsore and

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weary at a tiny inn by the side of a wood. The buxom landlady looked him up and down, then, laughing merrily, she made answer: 'Well, it is the queerest way of paying a hotel bill ever I heard. But the brickies will be in soon. You can give them a tune.'

'Roight, bedad, and you'll hear them dancin'.'

He had washed himself in a brook, for he carried both soap and a towel, and put on his shoes and stockings. His hair he had brushed, using the stream for a mirror, so he was looking just what he thought himself, 'a dacint bhoy indade.' The landlady beckoned him into the back kitchen, and placed a nice supper before him.

'Eat, dear,' she said kindly, 'whether you can pay or not. What does your father do?'

Now Rory was not a boy addicted to crying much, but the woman's kindly tone, and the mention of his father, made the tears come to his eyes.

'Och! if ye plaze, ma'am, poor father's dead, and mother is dead; ivery one av the two o' them has gone up-bye—you know.'

'Poor lad! Now eat, and don't think of it. I'm sorry I spoke.'

The brickies did arrive, and sat outside on the benches enjoying a cup or two of beer and a pipe.

'Gintlemen,' said Rory, saluting the largest group—they were kindly-looking men, though rough and reddened with brick-dust—'Gintlemen, can I play ye a tune?'

'That ye can, and a dozen if ye likes. But take a taste of my cup first. Ye doan't look an ordinary tramp.'

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'Sure, ye'll excuse me, sorr, but I niver taste the craytur.'

He played now; slow, plaintive airs at first, then marches. From their eager eyes and forward-bent faces, he knew he was giving them pleasure. Then there was knocking with mugs, and a girl appearing, these were soon refilled.

Rory took a rest and talked to them, and told them a fairy story or two. They listened like babies. By-and-by, as the sun sank lower towards the horizon, Rory took up his shillelah, and twirled it Irish fashion.

'Whoop!' he shouted; 'it's something merry I'll be after playin' ye.'

He jumped on top of a huge stone that intoxicated farmers used to help them to mount their nags, and began playing the most stirring hornpipe in all creation —'Banks's.'

'Jack, Bill, Peter,' cried a young brickie, 'we can't stand this nohow, can us?'

'No!' was the general shout.

Next minute, and for minute after minute—for an hour or more, in fact—the causeway was crowded with merry dancers. How they did yell and shout, to be sure, although, as far as elegance went, a rhinoceros might have tripped it as well on the light fantastic toe!

Molly, the maid, had to join; a peasant woman trudging home with a basket was dragged off the road, and she had to dance 'willy-nilly,' as the brickies called it. A policeman came past and stopped. He leant backwards, supported on his stick, and laughed till the glasses in the bar dindled,

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more or less. But at last he had to mix in the revels, and, with his stick in both hands held high above his head, his performance brought down the house. He danced till he had to sit on the bench and gasp.

But closing time drew near. Rory played *The Last Rose of Summer*, and unscrewed his flute. And then the hat went round. Two shillings and ninepence, and not all coppers either!

He had a snug bed that night, and, with nothing to disturb him, he slept till cock-crowing, and lay two hours longer, because the house was all so still.

'No, my boy, I'll take no money from an orphan,' said the landlady, when he asked what was to pay after breakfast.

She kissed him a kindly good-bye, too; and so he went on his way rejoicing.

. . . . . .

I wish I could follow all the devious wanderings of poor Rory with his flute. I may probably tell you in full of his wanderings another day, for every foot of the way he tramped I know well. I must, however, draw in my horns, as the snail said to the sun.

But never, probably, will any of my readers experience the weariness of a barefoot walk of wellnigh two hundred miles. It was not so bad in fine weather, for then he found folks genial and generous. But when rain fell in torrents and the wind blew high it was different.

His feet grew sore and blistered with paddling through the mud; but he dared not wear his only pair of boots. His clothes grew shabby also, and often he had little to eat, and did not earn a farthing in the day. He was often sorely tempted to break

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his poor pound and pay for a bed. But this he must keep for a stand-by. So he contented himself with a nap at night beneath the hedgerows, or in an outhouse. And so he wandered on and on, until after an interminable time—it was only a month after all—he found himself in London.

Fain would he have stayed here for weeks, for people were kind, and never once was he ordered to move on. But time pressed; he fluted his way out of the great city, and started for Southampton.

He lay down one terribly wild wet night at the foot of a stack. Hardly a morsel had he eaten all day, so no wonder he was weak. He arose next day to continue his journey, and found himself unable to stand. His brain reeled, and he fainted away.

Rory opened his eyes in a strange room, and found himself in bed. He stared about him bewilderedly. The bed was but little larger than a child's cot; a window opened on to a garden; the room was painted as to its walls, and destitute of all ornaments. It was, indeed, a cottage hospital. A nurse came in presently, and told him he had been there for three days in a state of fever. He was sensible now, though, and told her all his strange story, which I hardly think she believed. When the doctor arrived and told him he could not allow him to leave yet for two weeks, then the poor weak boy lay back on his pillow and wept. He would be too late—after all his sufferings—to see Allan.

When the doctor left, with strict injunctions to the nurse to keep him in bed, Rory began to think. He must get well. He was determined to. It was the lying in bed that kept him weak. Perhaps so. But

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here we must leave him in grief, for our story takes us elsewhere.

. . . . . .

After seeing London most thoroughly, if this is possible, Uncle Jack, Ross, and our young hero returned to Castle Indolence. Allan had bought out of his own money many delightful presents for his mother and Ailie. But their sorrow at the thought of parting with him completely filled their minds.

And now the days flew past wonderfully quick, and Allan was all ready to start off to join his ship a whole week beforehand. It must be admitted that the Company had treated him most generously, and, what is more, the manager promised to have an eye to his future career.

There was still his uniform to buy, but there were two whole days to spare. Allan was only a boy, and, being a boy, he felt sorry that Ailie could not see him in his new rig-out, for he felt very smart indeed. He wondered that the tailor who fitted him had not been more impressed by the dignity of his order.

When at last he got out into the street in his new rig-out, with its gilt buttons and brass-bound cap, he was quite shy and self-conscious, for he felt certain that every eye was turned towards him and nobody else.

When he got on board the night before sailing, he found everything still in disorder and confusion on the upper deck. Men and officers were shouting, sing-songing, hauling, and hoisting, with the view of getting things struck below as speedily as possible.

Allan had gone on board alone. When he got across the gangway and found himself in the uproar, he didn't well know what to do. So he went and

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stood beside the capstan for a time. He asked several men where the captain was. Only one hand answered. His reply was:

'Where's the cap'n? Eh? Where's your grandmother?'

At last a nice-looking young fellow in a dark jacket, and wearing a cap on the back of his head, and a light moustache on his lip, came past. To him —the steward—the lad told his name and repeated his inquiry.

'The "old man,"' he said, 'won't be on board till to-morrow morning; but I can show you your bunk, and your chest is there already. But that tall, lean, red-faced fellow on the quarter-deck yonder is the chief officer. Better report yourself to him; only, take care how you speak. He isn't in the best of tempers, and he's been at the bottle.'

Allan walked boldly up and saluted.

'Humph!' was the reply, 'you're the sucking middy, I suppose. Well, all right. But you'd better go down below and put on a canvas jumper, and I'll find something for your tender hands to do that'll help to harden them.

'What, a dog!' he roared, on seeing poor Tronso. 'Can't have it. On shore you go with the beast.'

Allan was angry now.

'Please, sir, I have the captain's permission to take my dog. I shall certainly go on shore again, and if Tronso doesn't sail with me *I* don't sail.'

The mate went forward, and left him, and just at that moment Uncle Jack appeared, and it was agreed they'd better stay for the night on shore, and see the captain in the morning.

Uncle Jack tipped the steward handsomely, and he promised to look after Allan as well as he could. 'But,' he added, 'the mate is a good sailor, and will put your lad up to the ropes, only in some ways he is a—a—*beast*. There!'

. . . . . .

Next morning, on boarding the Livingstone, everything was in better trim, though the dock-hands were still at work, and there was a terrible din. Uncle Jack found out the captain, a very pleasant man of about five-and-thirty, and he gave Allan his hand and a hearty welcome.

'I've heard all about this lad, and I like his looks. I shall try to be his sea-dad for a time. Come below for five minutes—no longer.'

'Thank you,' said Uncle Jack, and a very pleasant quarter of an hour they spent in the captain's quarters.

Then came Uncle Jack's parting with Allan. The boy would not cry for the world, because other middies or apprentices were looking on, just to see if 'mamma's darling was going to make a little booby baby of itself.'

When the Livingstone cast off at last, Uncle Jack might have been seen standing among the crowd and waving his red bandana handkerchief till he could see her no more. Allan was going to make a plunge below, amidships, where his quarters were, when a tall young fellow linked his arm through his.

'Want to go and cry, don't you?'

'Well, yes, I think I do.'

'Well, do not. Our mess is a bit rough, only they are good fellows at heart. I'm called Smith—Jack Smith, a very unusual name for an Englishman.

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Well, you're a Scottie, and you'll get chaffed a bit. Take it easy, and if any one wants to fight, fight; and if you can't, and the cause is just, *I'll* do it. I rather like you. Come and walk the deck. Mind this—the mate'll allow you two days to enjoy the pleasures of sea-sickness, then on deck you'll be bundled, for the mate is a—— I shan't say what.'

'I'm glad I've found a friend,' said Allan.

'Nonsense! Now for a walk. You'll need your sea-legs ere long. Come.'

And Allan went.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE STOWAWAY

WHEN a man-o'-war leaves port she sails under sealed orders, which the captain is not permitted to open until he is at a certain distance from land, or at the particular place specified. It is different with the mercantile marine, for every one knows long before whither a ship is bound. And so it was no secret, even to the men, that the good ship Livingstone was to clear and get off, not only for the Cape and India, but for every port in her route up the East coast of the great Dark Continent.

So that although junior officers of merchant ships have not, as a rule, a vast number of adventures on shore—in fact, with some vessels they may spend but a few hours at each port—this ship would be in many instances an exception.

Besides, the good-natured captain, or 'old man,' as nearly all hands called him, was a shareholder in her to a very large amount. He was, moreover, a free-and-easy English gentleman, and exceedingly fond of sport and exploration. Though he knew his first officer's faults better than any one, knew he was a bit of a bully, and that he was fond of 'the devil in

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solution,' though never unfit for duty, he knew also that he was a strict disciplinarian, and *would* have the work done; so the skipper rather liked him than otherwise, and bore with him. Court was this gentleman's name.

Now let me tell all who care to know, that the title of 'captain' does not really belong, though custom has sanctioned it, to any vessel or steamboat of the merchant service. Nor is it etiquette to call any craft that does not belong to the Royal Navy 'the ship.' Barque, schooner, brig, boat, or even full-rigged ship, but not 'the ship.' Some of Her Majesty's Captains, R.N., are most particular—too much so, perhaps—on this point.

We of H.M.S. Penguin boarded a barque once in the Indian Ocean to look at her papers, for she might have been a slaver in disguise. The skipper came back with our sub-lieutenant. He was short of stores, and wanted to get some. I was on deck when he came on board. It was an amusing interview. This worthy skipper didn't salute the quarter-deck as he stepped on board. Nor did he salute the captain. He simply walked briskly forward, and held out an honest brown hand for a shake. The captain would not touch it.

'Who are you, sir?'

'I'm Captain Gardner, sir.'

'Gardner?—Gardner? I don't remember the name. What is the name of your craft?'

'My *ship* is the Dorothy Gray of Hull.'

'Why, sir, there is no such name in the Navy List.'

'Mebbe not, sir, but yonder she floats, and we don't want to fight either.'

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'Well, remember, *Mr.* Gardner, there are no *captains* in your trading service, and no *ships*.'

'I hope no offence, sir,' said Mr. Gardner. 'I'm always called captain, and a ship's a ship as long's she floats, so there! I came on board to you to beg for a favour. I would not accept it now if I and my men were starving. Good morning, sir.'

He marched proudly forward and got over the side, leaving our captain silent and frowning. I felt sorry for that skipper, and really I think our captain was a bit of a cad. But any master mariner may be styled 'captain' through courtesy.

. . . . . .

Young Allan Adair found himself, somewhat to his relief, in the second mate's watch, and *he* was a sailor from bowsprit to binnacle. He took up duty at once, though somewhat squeamish, and began to do his best to learn seamanship.

And now I have to tell you of a very strange occurrence, which came to light when the Livingstone was barely three full days out. The mate had gone on watch—the morning, from four till eight—and had not been long up before one of the men came from below to make a report. He saluted and said:

'Strikes me, sir, this ship's 'aunted, sir.'

'Haunted indeed! What do you mean?'

The vessel—full-rigged she was—under an easy spread of canvas was edging along the Bay of Biscay, and there was hardly a sound to be heard save the gentle swishing of the water alongside and the occasional flapping of a sail. The mate looked sleepy and seedy, and his temper was venomous.

'Well, there is music coming up from the forehold.

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The chief officer strode angrily forward towards the ladder.

'I hear nothing,' he said.

But presently he did.

It was the plaintive notes of a flute, playing that sad, sweet Irish air, *Dermot Asthore.*

'Remove the hatch instantly; there is a stowaway there.'

The men did as told, and presently dragged up into the twilight of early morning poor Rory himself.

'Bring the young scoundrel on deck!'

Rory was in a bath of perspiration, and being as black as soot, was a really pitiful spectacle.

'Your name, you ragamuffin! and what are you doing here without leave?'

'Sure, sorr, ye needn't be angry with a poor boy. Me name is Rory O'Flinn, and it is going to see the wurrld entoirely that I am.'

'Oh, are ye? More likely you'll see the inside of a shark first. But I'll teach you a lesson, you insolent young land-lubber! You shall have a wash.'

'And that same I'm sorely needin' sorr, and a bedroom too, with more convayniences in it.'

But little did the poor lad know what was before him.

'Rig the stowaways' boat,' said Mr. Dewsbury—that was the rather pretty name that clung to his figure-head.

The men addressed went reluctantly to work, and were soon ready. The boat in question was a triangle, long, with sharp bows, her gun'ales all bamboo, her sides and bottom canvas. It was a boat that did not leak, would not sink, but soon got filled

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with the wash of the water in the wake. It had been used more than once before, and I have seen stowaways receive far worse treatment than even this.

'Tow him astern for ten minutes,' continued the mate, harshly.

Rory bolted like an eel. There was chase given, but it was soon found out it was only for his 'baggage' he was going. He returned on deck very soon, with the tiny haversack in his hand.

'Troth,' he said, looking at the mate, 'if it's all the way to England I've got to go in that slip of a dinghy, it's not widout me baggage I'm going and me flute. It's a morsel of prog (food) I'll be needin' on the way, and a clane shirt when I land, just for dacency sake.'

He was ordered into the frail boat, which an ordinary Greenland shark could have swallowed with ease. He nodded carelessly to the mate.

'Good-bye,' he said, 'and bad scran to ye. It's the red nose that's on the ugly face o' ye. Drink poor Rory's health in your next glass. There's sour ye look. If ye were buttermilk a pig wouldn't go nare ye. Keep away from the drink, sorr, and put a rusty nail in your water.'

The mate seized a rope's end, but the men, half-choking with suppressed merriment, speedily lowered away, and Rory was soon floating astern. The mate walked about fuming.

'Well, here's a wind-up to a windy day,' said the boy to himself; 'and och! I haven't seen Allan after all!'

But his boat began to fill in the broken water, and Rory began to bale with his hat.

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'Pooh!' he cried next, 'it's the bit o' string that's doing it.'

Out came his knife, and he speedily cut the little hawser that bound him to the ship.

'Sure,' he continued, 'I'll get out of the froth now.'

And so he did; then baling cleared the half-swamped boat, and Rory found himself in blue water smooth and clear. He opened his bag and ate heartily, then gave an uneasy look around.

'Glad there's no whales about. Troth, if a whale could swallow Jonah, it's a poor chance a little bhoy like me would have.'

He had now drifted far astern, or, rather, the Livingstone was far ahead. Now the men, who hated Dewsbury as much as they hated bad tobacco, had been keeping an eye on Rory, and when they saw him cut the hawser they went off immediately and reported the matter to the mate.

The fellow stamped and raved; but as he had no wish to be tried for manslaughter, after a turn or two up and down the deck, he ordered a boat to be lowered. It was a long pull, and the men did not hurry.

'She is lying to,' said one, 'and can't go without us.'

'Wish the old boy himself had the mate,' said another.

When they reached Rory's boat at last, he was softly and quietly playing *Kathleen Mavourneen* on his flute. His back was towards them.

'Lie on your oars for a jiffy,' said the coxswain. 'I know that song,' and he trolled out a verse:

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'Kathleen Mavourneen, the grey dawn is breaking,
The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill,
The lark from her light wing the bright dew is shaking—
Kathleen Mavourneen, what, slumbering still!
Oh, hast thou forgotten this day we must sever?
Oh, hast thou forgotten this day we must part?
It may be for years, and it may be for ever:
Oh, why art thou slumbering, thou voice of my heart?'

Sweet and beautiful the combined music of flute and voice came trembling over the water. The grey dawn had nearly given place to day, and red clouds floated high overhead. Gulls wheeled round and round, their voices seeming to bid the mariners a long farewell.

. . . . . .

After returning on board with his baggage, and having a good wash, Rory looked quite respectable. He was brought before the captain himself—master mariner I ought to say, but won't—at eight bells. Rory thought he was going to be hanged at the very least, so he trembled a little. But the good-natured skipper forgave the lad, much to the mate's chagrin.

'I think you've punished the lad too much already,' he said, more sternly than usual.

Then he elicited all Rory's story from him, and Tronso, the Irish terrier, and Allan coming up just at that moment, the truth of the young stowaway's statements was soon confirmed.

'Can you do anything on board?' said Captain Court.

'I can fish, your honour's honour.'

The skipper smiled.

'An' sure I can play the flute so swately that the larks will be falling out av the sky to listen, and if

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ye've a priest on board I'd make even him dance, sorr.'

'All right, lad, we'll teach you to haul a rope. Mr. Dewsbury, let him be put in the second mate's watch.'

'Not in mine, sir?'

'No.'

The captain wheeled in sailor fashion and walked below. Rory's sorrows were at an end, for a time at any rate.

But what a fuss Tronso made over the lad! As long as the mate remained on deck Allan was half afraid to go forward. But Dewsbury soon went to breakfast; then our hero told his friend, Jack Smith, everything.

'The mate's a brute,' said Jack; 'and one of these days it is possible I may give him a hiding. I shall, if I can catch him on shore.'

Both went forward, and right hearty were the greetings betwixt the two boys. That very night Jack Smith brought Rory below, and it was soon evident he was quite a 'broth of a boy.' He repeated the story of his wanderings, and we already know most of it.

The surgeon of the little cottage hospital in which we left Rory was really doing the boy more harm than good, though with the best intentions, for he was fretting to get on his way.

'Bedad, I'll hop,' he said one night to himself; 'it isn't me that's going to stop here to die.'

His clothes were dry and carefully folded on a chair. His grip-sack, his flute, his stick, all were safe.

He waited till all was still. By good luck a big

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round moon was shining into the room, and he quickly dressed, finding himself far stronger than he could have believed possible. Then he gently opened the window and let himself out. Unluckily, the window went down with a bang, and just as he was scaling the wall he saw a nurse's light in the window, and heard the hue and cry raised.

But, fleet as a deer, the boy made for an adjoining wood. After an hour's wandering he found himself once more back in the main road, which he knew from the telegraph-wires.

He listened for a moment, but all was silent. If they had gone in pursuit, therefore, they must have gone the wrong way, so he felt safe.

But now to walk to Southampton would be impossible; time would not permit. Towards morning he felt tired, and slept beneath a bush till eight, had breakfast at a little inn, and was rejoiced indeed when he heard the hooting of trains and found himself close to a station.

He had to wait for a whole hour before catching a train. A policeman passed and repassed him, and his poor heart went pit-a-pat. But the train rolled in at last, and an hour or two after he was landed at Southampton Station.

But the greatest difficulty and danger was yet to be encountered. He had to stow away. If any of my readers think of following Rory O'Flinn's example, they had better refrain. You never know what may happen. Many a boy has been found ere now crushed to death with shifting ballast or cargo.

Well, there were policemen hanging around at midnight, but Rory came along whistling and asked

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one of these for a light for a cigarette—he never smoked.

'No,' gruffly answered the man; 'boys should have no right with a pipe.'

'Thank ye for nothing, thin,' said Rory, with an assumption of boldness he was far from feeling.

Then, still whistling, he worked his way on board, and got quickly below in the semi-darkness. Fate seemed to favour him, for while he hid in a corner there was a plash alongside and the rattling of heavy chains. A bale of goods had slipped and fallen overboard. Everybody ran on deck, and Rory made a dash for a hatch and lowered himself.

'There is enough below here,' he heard a man say, and then a grating was put on, and Rory was delighted to find he had a cabin all to himself. Tired and weary, he fell sound asleep, and the ship was far out at sea before he awoke.

He determined to stay where he was as long as he could, but his provisions gave out, the place grew stifling, and his thirst was unbearable.

'It's going to die entoirely I am,' he said to himself at last, 'but och! sure I'll play meself a tune first and foremost.'

He did so, and we know the result. Rory really played charmingly, and the fiddler and he getting chummy, the two became the life of the ship forward.

Glad he was, though, to be in the same watch as Allan, and when they kept it at night, and the stars got brighter and brighter as they sailed farther south, it was a real pleasure for the lads to talk together, while leaning over the bulwarks, about the days that already seemed so far away.

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CHAPTER IX

LIFE ON THE GOOD SHIP LIVINGSTONE

THERE were three young fellows on board the old Livingstone, as she was called for love, who were bound to be good friends. Two, as we know, were friends already, but the third was Jack Smith.

Smith may not be an excessively aristocratic name, but Jack—tall, somewhat lanky Jack—was come of a very good family, and very independent he was, though engaging in manners. A thoroughly English face had Jack: long chin, decided nose, brows that lowered when thinking, and a high, open forehead. It was not for pride that Jack would keep twirling that budding moustache of his; it was entirely a habit. He took to Rory from the first, because he was so good a musician, and Jack himself could sing; then the boy amused him; and moreover, he was not long in finding out that Rory wore his heart upon his sleeve.

So the ship sailed on, and the time rolled slowly by. They would touch nowhere until they reached the Cape of Good Hope. These were the fresh orders received a week before she left harbour. Other and smaller vessels would take cargo to Sierra Leone

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and the islands in the East Atlantic. The Livingstone's 'load up' was of great value, a considerable portion of it being rifles of the very newest pattern, with tens of thousands of cartridges.

Well, now, not counting Allan, who was only on a trial voyage, so to speak, though it was going to be a much longer one than either he himself or his uncle imagined, there were in the apprentices' mess no less than three sucking sailors, as the second mate styled them, Peter Levin, Jack Stuart, and Chang. I have little to say at present about Peter and Jack the Second, as Stuart was endearingly called. But there were tons of a quiet humorous sort of good-nature about Chang. He was short in stature, but probably weighed as much as Jack Smith—well, nearly. He was fat. That was how he received his nickname. He had been baptized Arthur Wellesley Epicurus Strong. And that was the title he had delivered to his messmates on his first coming on board last voyage.

'Good gracious, who's going to remember all that?' cried Jack Smith. 'Peter, pass the potatoes; I can always think best with a morsel of potato in my mouth. Now,' he continued, 'let me see; you know, Arthur Thingumibob, that you are as fat as a cream-cheese.'

'Yes, Jack.'

'And much the same shape.'

'Am I?' said Arthur, appealing to Peter.

Peter nodded.

'I'm the shape of a cream-cheese, Jack Smith?'

'Well, then, to draw it mild, you have what doctors call a slight inclination to embonpoint (pronounce

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em-bong-pwang), so we shall rebaptize you Pwang. Are you satisfied?'

'Oh, I'm obliged to be, I suppose.'

'I move an amendment,' cried Peter, knocking on the table with the handle of his knife. '"Pwang" is a beastly word to pronounce; you've got to stretch your mouth so, to get it out——'

'And really, Peter,' interrupted Jack, 'your mouth doesn't need extension.'

'Silence!' cried Peter, 'I've got the platform. I was going to propose, Mr. President, that we substitute "Chang" for "Pwang." It is neater, and it is a word that comes easier down the wind.'

'All right,' said Arthur. 'A little pudding, please, steward.'

'A bonnie roly-poly you'll soon be if you go on eating pudding like that,' said Stuart.

But Chang only smiled. Nothing ever put the little round fellow out of temper. Wonderfully active, though, was Chang. The monkey himself, a great favourite of Chang's, could not have rushed the ratlines much more nimbly, and he gave the men a lesson, too, in movement. He took abundant exercise, was up every morning at 'wash-deck,' and had the hose turned on him, and otherwise did all he could to reduce his 'pwang,' as he called his fat.

'I'll be quite a greyhound by the end of the voyage, if I keep on like this. Won't I, doctor?' he asked the young Scotch surgeon.

'It's no the keepin' on, man,' replied the surgeon, taking his black cutty from his mouth, 'it's the keepin' off. Stow your poodin'-eatin'. Bah! Chang, I wash my han's o' ye.'

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'They've much need, doctor,' said Peter.

But Peter bolted next second, for the doctor owned a biceps and a fist big and hard enough to start the bung of a cask.

. . . . . .

There was nothing alarmingly smart about the Livingstone herself. She was just a big, well-built swinger of a three-master, full-rigged. She looked nice at a distance, though on board one would have objected to the height of her bulwarks and the weight of everything. She was not airy enough for an up-to-date sailor, and put one in mind of old East Indiamen, pictures of which we may have seen. Never mind, she was safe, and had more sea-board than she knew what to do with.

The Livingstone was not going to turn turtle anyhow, as some men-o'-war have done, and she was not going to carry away a stick, even in a circular storm. As she went ploughing past steamers homeward bound, she appeared to look at them with disdain.

'I wouldn't be a thing like that,' she told old Father Neptune, 'for ballast of gold, and a new coat of paint.'

'Well,' replied Neptune, '*I* don't like the beggars, I can assure you. They are perpetually pitching cinders in my eyes. Nothing I like to see better than a crowd o' sail and a copper bottom.'

Jack Smith liked Rory, and he and Allan determined to advance his education a bit.

'That's a good idea, Jack,' said Allan; 'if we could get him to talk better English, it would be an advantage to him in after-life.'

They placed the case before Rory. He was delighted, and so his better education began. Allan knew nothing of navigation, but he was in many respects a classical scholar; for in Scotland the schools are infinitely superior to those south of the Border. Rory could write, though, and he became very desirous to talk properly.

'Correct me whenever you plaze, and I'll try to remimber it.'

'Well, now, say "please," not "plaze," and "remember," not "remimber."'

Rory at once pulled out a penny exercise-book and a pencil. The last he wetted with his lips.

'Don't!' cried Allan.

'Don't what?'

'Don't wet your pencil. Only women do that.'

'Well, it's putting down the things I am, that I shouldn't say. Look.'

Allan looked. It was a droll list, headed

'*Thou shalt not say*'—

and here are one or two samples. 'Thou shalt not say "Av coorse"; "av" is "of," and "coorse" is "course." "Me" for "my." "Bhoy" is "boy." "Bedad!" "Troth!" "Faix!" "Mesilf!"' and thus it ran for pages. But this was the only way poor Rory could help himself.

Allan and Jack Smith had a good laugh at what Rory called his 'Remimbirance Book,' but really the lad made good progress. He kept his ears open, and his weather-eye lifting also. And no boy, be he English or Irish, who does so can help doing well.

For a time it seemed as if this voyage of the

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Livingstone was going to be a very adventureless one indeed. It was very pleasant, anyhow, all the way to the line, or region of calms, especially after they got into the trades. Oh, the lovely sparkling water! —don't I think I see it as I write? and oh, the bracing, spanking breeze! The waves are wavelets, dark, and almost black in the hollows, but green or blue when the light shimmers through their curling tops. The frigate-bird may dart across our hawse here. He is after the shoals of tiny whitebait or the young of large fish, and can be seen, especially on a calm day, turning acres of the ocean's surface into beds of mercury; or so you might fancy.

That darting, wee, dark dot of a bird flying hither and thither is Mother Carey's chicken, which some seafarers tell you bodes a storm. But they love it, I think, for all that. Here you may often see a huge shark sidling along and glaring up at you with his evil eye, as if begging you to throw the cook's boy overboard, 'just for a minute.' Look at his angry, strangely-shaped teeth. Ugh! I'd rather be devoured by a tiger of the jungle than by that sly and scaly monster, the tiger of the sea.

But the sunsets, the skies—who can describe them? Their glory, their wondrous colours, their strange fantastic shapes, and, better than all this, the fascinating power they possess to carry one's thoughts into the far, far beyond, and shore up one's belief in the existence of a happy home, an eternal one, as well as in the mercy and goodness of a Supreme Being who is doing all for the best.

The good ship Livingstone found herself becalmed one day, and in the doldrums; she intimated to the

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captain and all concerned that she did not mean to go any farther, not a single knot. Unpleasant enough some days was the motion of those glittering, oil-like, windless waves. Unpleasant to walk in a rolling, ever-changing motion like this. Towards night one's very bones ached, and weariness made one yawn.

Then there was the fierce heat of the sun, shining from a sky that burned and caused the very pitch in the deck to melt. Dewsbury was—or pretended he was—fond of seeing an ivory-white quarter-deck. This was impossible now, for every footstep, even brave little Tronso's, spotted the planks with tar.

The doldrums are enough to ruin the temper of most sailors. Dewsbury had none to lose, and the poor dog irritated him beyond measure. It was not altogether Tronso's fault; he did not know he was doing any harm by spotting the decks. The poor fellow even tried to make friends with his enemy, although he received many a kick on the sly from him.

But Tronso's good intentions were frustrated, and the mate in his wrath sent him forward, hurling a marling-spike after him. Had this iron instrument struck the man whose head it went whizzing past, it would have brained him. It was a very narrow shave, and I think it was this act on the part of Dewsbury that led to the tragedy I shall but briefly describe.

This marling-spike stuck fast in the deck, so great was the force with which it had been thrown. Now even 'common sailors,' as shore folks call them, are not slaves, as they used to be to a considerable extent in the old times.

The man—Moonshine was his name—picked up the

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horrid and dangerous weapon, and waiting until the captain came on deck, walked aft and addressed him:

'Beggin' pardon, sir, but if you can spare a hand, I'd like you to put me on shore at the Cape.'

'No, Moonshine, I cannot spare a hand. You have signed articles, and I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to abide by them. But what is your complaint?'

'This, sir,' and he showed the iron tool. 'When the chief officer takes to throwin' marlin'-spikes at his men, they can't help feelin' sick and sorry they've come.'

'You lie, Moonshine!' roared the mate. 'I threw it at the dog, and I'm sorry it didn't scupper him.'

The skipper took a few rapid turns up and down the deck. No one had ever seen anger cloud his handsome face before. Then he called Jack Smith.

'Have all hands piped on deck, and aft here.'

The mate grew white, though his eyes were sadly bloodshot.

'Officers and men,' said the captain, quietly, 'I desire to reprimand Mr. Dewsbury, though it is sorely against my will. But in giving vent to sudden outbursts of anger, as he has lately done, he is acting in a way that is most ungentlemanly, and which may lead to insubordination and mutiny on the part of the men. Mr. Dewsbury is a most excellent sailor, and there is a reason, as he himself well knows, why his temper should not be as excellent as his seamanship.'

The mate gnashed his teeth, and seemed to curse beneath his breath.

'I have now a most unpleasant duty to perform,' continued the good skipper.

Then turning to his chief officer:

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'Mr. Dewsbury,' he said, in a tone that was really sorrowful, 'I shall dispense with your services for two weeks, during which time I pray you to put yourself under the doctor's hands, and thus endeavour to regain your health.'

Then this kindly captain took his mate by the hand.

'I bear you no animosity, Dewsbury,' this with visible tears in his eyes; 'we have known each other long, and now I look upon the unpleasantness you have caused as but the result of your lowered condition of health.

'Hands dismiss!'

. . . . . .

The ship was once more under all sail, with stu'n'sails low and aloft. She was ripping through the water, and every one was happy and gay.

No, I am wrong; not *every one*. Dewsbury was below in terrible agony. The doctor—whose face was clouded—had stopped all his liquor.

'Oh, terribly bad!' was his answer to Jack Smith, when he inquired how he was. 'Terribly ill. His agony, his dreams, if he drops asleep for but a moment, must be like those of the bottomless pit. A more fearsome face I never beheld. He is bathed in sweat, his hair is draggled, and he looks altogether like a hunted wild beast.'

Allan and Rory were yarning together next night as they kept the middle watch. The moon was shining on the waters. There was not a sound to be heard, when suddenly some strange apparition in white ran past them on its hands and knees. Both boys stood speechless and terrified, especially when the apparition

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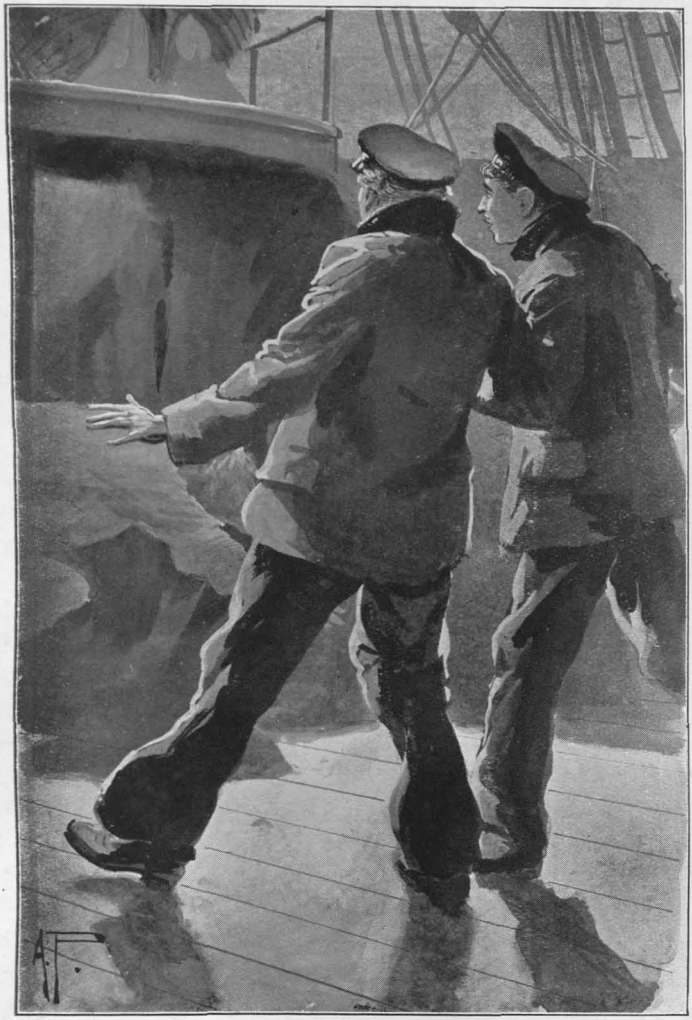

A STRANGE APPARITION IN WHITE RAN PAST THEM.

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leapt, monkey-like, on to the bulwarks, and with a yell of terror that they could never forget, sprang into the sea.

They rushed forward, and just for a moment they saw in the moon-rays that same fearsome, upturned, haunted face that the doctor had described. Dewsbury's cot was found empty. The man placed on guard had slumbered for a few minutes, and the wretched mate had seized the opportunity to escape.

. . . . . .

There was sorrow for a time for the terrible fate that had befallen the man, and even his sins were forgotten or forgiven. Then things brightened up once more. In another week there would be a spell of leave for every one. This was something exceedingly nice to look forward to.

It was next to the pleasure of being homeward bound. But no one was *longing for that* yet, only the men were busy enough writing letters to the dear ones they had left behind them, and so it is needless to say was Allan, to those he had parted with in sorrow and tears at Castle Indolence.

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Allan had got on famously with his messmates. One or two had certainly chaffed him about his country and his language. Our hero took it all in good part, and gave back banter for banter, as often as *not turning* the laugh against the speaker. There is really nothing like good-nature anywhere, but especially at sea, where, to say the least, a lad often gets a deal to rile him.

But, on the whole, life on board the Livingstone was very pleasant. She was not a fast ship by any

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means, but she was sure. The snail, be it remembered, lays no claim to racing speed, but the snail gets there all the same. Neither did the Livingstone ever pretend to be an ocean greyhound. When she gave a lurch to leeward, she took her own time to get on an even keel again. When she raised her bows, she appeared to be struck all of a heap with some particular appearance of the clouds, and when she at last consented to lower them, she did so with a splash, so as to make up for lost time.

The sailors used to chaff her, and tell her to 'go ahead, old lazy,' or never to mind, but just to take it easy, because time did not count, and the more months the more fifteens (alluding to their wages, which were, however, three times fifteen shillings, according to rating).

'They live longest who don't worry,' the ship seemed to reply. 'I'm not going to run foul of anything, and don't you forget it.'

'Och! Allan, dear,' said Rory one evening, 'and it's among the savages we'll be to-morrow. Surely they won't eat us all up.'

The fact is that this innocent Irish lad expected to find even Cape Colony a land of howling savages, who never studied fashion books, carried bows and arrows, and had daggers hanging in the lobes of their ears. And nobody took the trouble to undeceive him. He would know the truth before long.

'Land on the lee bow!'

There was a half-suppressed but joyful shout, and the captain himself got aloft to have a look at it. Yes, there it was—a long, grey-blue cloud on the eastern horizon. Hurrah!

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CHAPTER X

ADVENTURES AT THE CAPE

IT must be confessed that even Allan Adair expected to find Cape Town a less civilized place than it is. Of course there were blacks, Kafirs and suchlike, but they looked as harmless as spring cockerels and quite as proud. Then the streets were wide and spacious, and crowded with respectable people of many nations. Some of the houses were palatial, and the hotels, if not quite so grand as those in London, were quite as comfortable, and quieter far.

Rory was allowed to spend the first day with Jack Scott and Allan. Jack had been here before, and was therefore well up to the ropes.

'The Dutchies,' he said, as they finished breakfast, 'are slow, demure, but likewise sure.'

'And good men to fight? The Boers?'

'Good with the gun? Remember your kilted countrymen and the Boers on Majuba Hill?'

'Yes,' said Allan, angrily. 'They were put up there to be shot.'

'It seems like it, and hardy Boers, who looked more like English country squires than soldiers, went quietly for the Gordons, as squires at home go popping at partridges on an autumn morning.'

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With the scenery all about Cape Town Allan was simply charmed. It was springtime in this part of the world, and Scotsmanlike the boy must go into rapture over what he called the heather, with which the mountains were clad. This was in reality splendid heaths, such as only grow in greenhouses at home, and require a deal of coaxing before they consent to blossom even in these.

'I've an idea,' said Jack.

'Carry it out by all means, then.'

'Here, Rory, get off on board with all speed, and most politely tell the captain that we should like to take a waggon ride to Simon's Town, if he can spare us for another day.'

Rory thought he ought to deliver this message in what he considered a most polished air and manner. He whipped off his cap when he met the captain on the quarter-deck, and bent so low that he could have touched his toes.

'If it's plazing to your honour's honour, Captain Court, sir, the boys, and that's just Liftenants Jack and Allan, would give the hair off their heads to get a night on shore and a day's ride in a jaunting car all the way to Simon's Town.'

'Off you go, lad, off you go,' replied the captain, smiling, 'and say, "Yes—two if they like!"'

There was some grass growing in Cape Town Street. It grew up through the stones, but it did not get time to grow up through poor Rory's toes. He was twirling his shillalah and waving his cap when he rushed into the hotel where the two young sailors were quaffing lemonade with ice in it. The black-skinned waiters straightened up and rolled the whites

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of their eyes as the Irish boy ran past them at the double.

'Hurrah! Hurroosh!! Two days if ye loike. Two days with nights to match. Hurrah!'

There is nothing a sailor delights in more than a drive behind two spanking horses. But in the long trip to Simon's Town our heroes had four, and that was glorious.

Luncheon they took with them. The way lay chiefly along the shore. Sometimes the Jehu forsook the path itself and went galloping over the hard, wet sands, or splashing through the water of a bay itself. The car rocked like a ship in a seaway. The horses were really ill-used screws, but fleet enough for all that.

The scenery was as beautiful as any that I know in Scotland, and there was to-day an Italian sky and a dazzling gleam on the water which betokened a most beautiful sunset. They arrived at last at a good hotel, singing as joyfully as only young sailors can. But the horses were flaked with 'sudd' and spume.

'Hullo! where are you from?'

It was a gruff voice from the upper balcony.

'Pretty lot you are! Ha! ha! ha! Ostler! Waiter!' continued the voice, 'see to the donkeys. Ha! ha! ha!'

'Now,' cried Jack—and he was a powerful fellow—'I'm going up to give that chap fits. No such reception suits Jack Smith.'

Up he ran, fuming.

'Give us a nut, old chap,' said the fellow who was to catch fits. The fellow was only a parrot, who screamed with laughter as Jack retired, looking rather foolish.

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They had a capital dinner, and then set out for a stroll up the mountain side. The geraniums all in bloom were, as Allan expressed it, 'a sight for sore eyes.' They did not go far up that hill, though, only far enough to enjoy the sunset—a grey blue over all the glassy bay; low hills at its distant head, half obscured in the purple haze of distance; and above, a deep orange strip with streaks of crimson clouds high towards the zenith.

But for the snakes they would have gone farther—the cobras, the great black and the whip snakes. This hill was their beautiful home, and our heroes were glad enough when they found themselves back once more on the clay-brown road.

There was a man-o'-war lying out yonder, and the liberty men in twos and threes were crowding down to wait for their big boat.

'Might I give them a tune?' said Rory to Jack.

'Well,' replied Jack, 'you may, but mind, lad, don't take money.'

Off went Rory, and in a very short time he had a crowd of those jolly tars dancing to *Banks's Hornpipe*. Then he changed his tune, and played the plaintive and sadly beautiful airs of both Scotland and Ireland. But the liberty boat was approaching. Many a sailor shook hands with Rory, and patted the lad on the back. Then a sailor took round his hat.

Oh, Jack is never mean!

'Stop it!' cried Rory. 'I've been playin' to plaze ye. But I'm an indipindent gintleman, and niver a cent of your money will I touch.'

So they gave him a cheer instead, and crowded into their boat. And as they sheered off, Rory stood on

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the pier playing *Good-bye, Sweetheart, Good-bye*, till they were out of hearing.

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The boys were back next day on board the Livingstone. There was a deal of cargo to be landed, and a deal to be shipped. Unfortunately, the latter would not be all ready for some weeks, so leaving the vessel in charge of the new first mate, with orders to hurry business up, Captain Court determined to run up country, and take Allan with him.

'Plaze mayn't I go too, sir,' begged Rory, 'and see the ilegant iliphants and the lions and 'gators, and the cannibals in all their naked glory? Plaze, sir, plaze!'

Laughingly the captain consented, and so the start was made on the very next day; not, however, before the skipper had shown Allan and his Irish boy the Botanic Gardens. I myself have delightful recollections of these, and if they are better to-day than when I viewed them, some twenty years ago, they are the most beautiful on earth.

It surprised Rory very much indeed to find a railway—a real snorting, puffing, whistling train—which was to take them all onwards and upwards for wellnigh seven hundred miles to Kimberley. And the carriages all so beautiful too, though without the dash and go of the Irish mail at home! He must whisper to Allan:

'Is it in Africa we are at all at all?'

'Sure enough it is,' was the reply, 'and we're off to Kimberley, where diamonds as big as plums grow on the gooseberry-bushes.'

'But the tigers?'

'There are no tigers anywhere in Africa, except

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the leopard or tiger-cat; and I fear, Rory, that we won't find so many crocodiles and lions as we would like to.'

'Och, niver mind, it's mesilf that will keep my eye on the gooseberry-bushes.'

They landed at last at the station, and after a good dinner our people drove off to Kimberley mines. They saw the mines, they saw the wonderful machinery; but though it was all interesting enough even to Allan Adair, and formed the subject of a long letter home, it was a trifle tiresome. To say the least of it, Rory was thoroughly disappointed; for he looked everywhere, but in vain, for the gooseberry-bushes laden with diamonds. He asked Allan about them. Allan only laughed.

'It is cheating a poor boy you'd be, Allan agra,' he said.

When, many months after this, the Livingstone lying-to close in shore in the Indian Ocean, Allan told Rory that Jack Smith and he were going on shore to gather oysters, which they would find growing on trees, Rory looked at him drolly.

'Do ye remimber the diamonds on the gooseberry-bushes?' he said. 'Once burned, twice shy, as me dear old mother used to say.'

But Allan forced him to come, and when he saw oysters clinging to the exposed roots of the mangrove-trees through which the rising tide swept, he looked still more drolly, and scratched his Irish poll.

'Sure,' he said, 'you may be roight after all, and it's to the roots of the gooseberry-trees the diamonds will be clinging.'

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Well, young readers, we could not well have landed at Cape Town without taking a kind of stampede through the Colony; but really civilization is advancing so rapidly there that I begrudge the space in which to describe all that the captain of the Livingstone with Allan and Irish Rory saw. The fact is that this author of yours is half a wild man at heart, and would rather look at a bonnie brier-bush any day, or a bit of sylvan scenery, than the best cathedral in Europe. I feel almost ashamed to confess that savages are more in my line than civilized folks; lone, lorn icefields than potato patches; and I believe I am too old to be made over again, so please do not expect me nor any of my young heroes to admire anything that is artificial.

Well, they visited Pretoria and Johannesburg also. Fine cities they are now, I believe, but tiresome to travel in, unless your boots are soled with indiarubber. During this grand tour, as Allan called it in his letters to the dear ones at home, Rory, who was neatly dressed, dined with Allan and the captain; for, poor though he was, he had been fairly well educated, and knew the etiquette of the table. When they returned to the ship, all would be changed.

Some of the hotels had a half-Indian, half-Italian appearance outside and in, with neat verandahs, and a swinging punkah over the table moved by invisible hands. But it was hot, and after dinner to sit and talk out on the verandah, to look at the stars—strange stars, and not such as we see here at home—and listen to music coming from some inner room, was the acme of pleasure and comfort. Then how soundly all did sleep, to be sure! although neither

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of the boys cared much for the weird-looking insects that crawled on the walls.

Near to one city Rory did see what he called savages after all. But they were exceedingly harmless. Their village was one of 'potato pits,' Rory said. Well, the huts were about that shape. The big folks here had no great superfluity of dress, and the pot-bellied children who rolled in the dust wore nothing at all.

The Kafirs were a different race. I have had all kinds of black and yellow servants, but never a Kafir, so concerning their moral character or ethics I cannot speak personally. Yet I have always admired their fine physique. They hold themselves erect; they have splendid chests and limbs. With their short hair and bullet heads they are not at all unlike some of our prize athletes at home—that is, if the latter were all black.

Ah! well, they got back to Cape Town at last, happy and jolly enough. Yet all any one could say was that he had 'done the Colony.' It would really take a year or more to do it properly. But Allan had a deal to tell his comrades, and Rory much information to communicate to the men.

The cargo was not even yet shipped, and ten days more went past before they were ready to sail again. Every one complimented Allan, when he returned, on his improved complexion. He had been fairly well sunburned before, but now he had developed a kind of reddish-brown. If in his mess they complimented him, they also chaffed him. Even Chang must have his mild bit of a joke on the subject.

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'When I was young,' he said, talking as if he were fifty at least, 'I painted a little——'

'Painted your face, Chang?'

'Don't interrupt, gentlemen; I say I painted, and I could have mixed a colour like that in a brace of shakes.'

'I call it pickled cabbage just going bad, you know,' said Peter.

'More like boiled beet,' said Jack II. 'But don't blush, old man; it's nothing to be very much ashamed of.'

. . . . . .

And now I must tell the strange story of Tronso's degradation. Those who know anything at all about dogs will believe this readily enough, and I may say that Tronso's case is the third I have known of the same kind.

This poor doggie, with all his love of fun and excitement, had the greatest regard for his master, and was never a moment happy when Allan Adair was out of his sight. But it would not have been convenient to have taken Tronso all the way up country, so our hero reluctantly left him behind.

The dog was very disconsolate for a day or two, refusing all food and lying about below or on deck panting. But one day at twelve he came down below, and when dinner was served he jumped upon Jack Smith's knee.

'I'm going to dine with you to-day,' he seemed to tell his master's friend, as he licked his nose, or tried to.

'Why!' cried Jack, 'why, Peter! Chang! Jack No. 2! I declare to you all the little beggar's been drinking. Smell his breath, you fellows.'

Tronso was handed round.

'Rum, without a doubt!' was the verdict.

'Steward, trot off and ask the men if they gave him any grog.'

The steward was quickly back.

'Some was spilled on the deck, sir, and Tronso lapped it up.'

There was a general laugh.

'Poor little rascal!' said Jack II. 'He was only trying to drown his sorrows in the flowing bowl.'

But it came to pass that Tronso took to drowning his sorrows somewhat too often. It was getting serious, and nothing could be done, for it came to light that the men gave him drops on the sly just for fun. Well, it was poor sport, but really Jack II could not deal hard with him. Besides, he was most affectionate in his cups. He would shake hands with everybody all round the table, and even with the steward, though he ought to have known better how to keep his place.

Then after dinner, when he got on deck, his capers were indescribable. Round and round the deck he went, wheeling, whirling, and barking at everybody. Then suddenly he seemed to remember his lost master, a most pitiful expression came over his countenance, and quietly enough now, but apparently half-dazed, he went off on a search for him. Unsuccessful in this, he would come back with a sigh, tumble down the companion and go to sleep in a corner.

But Tronso seemed to get a bit out of his mind at last. He would be angry and affectionate by turns. He would snap at invisible insects and chase

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invisible rats. Things were coming to a crisis, but he always managed to sneak forward for a drop of grog.

Then his master returned, and poor little Tronso, after going daft with joy, sat down and barked and howled like a little mad thing, as if trying to unburden his mind of all its troubles to him whom he loved best on earth.

'What is the matter?' inquired Allan, anxiously.

Then his messmates told him the whole story. Well, desperate diseases need desperate cures; the doctor took him in hand, and shut him up in a spare cabin, beyond the reach of temptation. The wee fellow had a fit or two, but he got well in a week.

The strange part of the affair is this: he got angry, barked, and ran off if any man even showed him a spoonful of rum after this. Wise dog!

. . . . . .

In a few weeks' time the ship was at anchor off Delagoa Bay. This town is a rising place. When I knew it first I thought the rocks and dark, deep water outside very romantic, and the scenery all round was like some of the prettiest parts of Surrey. It is a Portuguese place, with a tumble-down fort and little soldiers in white. So rickety was the fort that had one of the guns been fired, I believe it would have tumbled down.

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CHAPTER XI

MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE IN THE FOREST

IT was not going to be all plain sailing with the Livingstone and her brave crew, for after visiting the Comoro Islands—probably the most beautiful I have ever seen in the Indian Ocean—and lying for weeks in the roadstead off the strange and wonderful city of Zanzibar, which I have often described before in my books and stories, they stretched away for Seychelles Island.

But one night after the sun went down, and tropical lightning had flashed for an hour or two behind the marvellous cumulus-clouds, banked along the eastern horizon, a clap of thunder like the explosion of heavy artillery made the ship shiver from stem to stern.

A storm was brewing. The glass had fallen with wonderful rapidity, and all preparations were made to withstand whatever might happen. Sail was taken in, leaving just enough for safety's sake and to steer well by. Moreover, the good ship was battened down, and the boats made doubly secure. For the captain had been here before, and well knew what was on hand. In less than half an hour the clouds had banked up, darkening the sun and obscuring the whole sky.

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There was something awe-inspiring and fearsome in the appearance of those awful cloud-masses that, though it was midday, brought the horizon close aboard of them and caused a darkness almost like that of night itself. And, every now and then, a blacker cloud, though smaller, would shoot out from the canopy, and go hurrying across the sky to another position. It put one in mind of some strange, wild, and gigantic beast, and was indeed a messenger of death or life in the battle that would soon begin. The wind had fallen, and when any one spoke it was in hushed and almost awestruck tones, as if afraid even of the sound of the voice.

Tronso and the monkey were great friends, and were now below in a corner in each other's arms, the monkey trembling with the fear of the unknown. There was no wind yet, not a breath to flap a sail. Whence, or from what direction, would the storm come?

Whish! A blinding streak of lightning like a river of blue blood, rushing down from the sky and cutting the clouds in two. Ten seconds—and then a loud peal of thunder came growling over the ocean. The waves were now round and smooth, but high.

On the side he happened to look overboard Allan noticed a huge and awful monster. It was like a great serpent, but probably a shark—that incarnate demon of the sea. He shuddered.

'Look! look!' cried Chang, pointing eastwards. Every one held his breath in terror.

High as a church, seemingly, and stretching from north to south, there came rushing on a seething curling-topped wall of water. As if by instinct every

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one made haste to grasp a rope or halyard and make himself fast. None too soon. The wave is near. The wave is *here*, and with it the roaring, howling storm. And the Livingstone for many seconds is as completely engulfed as if she were at the deep sea bottom.

Mercy on us, 'twas a terrible time! Two men were washed overboard, but no one knew then. All were nearly drowned where they stood or lay. When the dear old ship recovered herself, and the decks for a time were clear, many of the crew seemed at death's door; some were black in the face and with eyes that started and stared in breathless agony. Such distorted faces as, were it possible, one might see down in the ocean where a ship has just foundered.

The Livingstone had started off through thunder, lightning, and rain, and through the surge and mist caused by the howling sea. Two men to the wheel—and a brave hand staggered aft to clutch the spokes and assist the seaman already there. A circular storm indeed—and while few ships could have withstood its force, few master mariners could have guided her through its ever-changing fury, until it subsided into a gale such as few may ever encounter and live.

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What a change! The Livingstone is lying here at Trincomalee, in Ceylon; lying at anchor, and Allan, Jack, and Rory are on shore. Jack knows many good people here, and Allan has letters of introduction, so they make morning calls and are invited to dinners, outings, and what not.

But at present they are on a little tour, and have procured a good and trustworthy guide. He is dark-

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skinned, and seven-eighths of his body is naked and glittering. His hassock of hair would nearly fill a footstool, but it does excellent service, by protecting him from the fierce rays of the sun.

Come to think of it, I never did see a black man or savage prostrated by sunstroke. One reason for this exemption is that the body itself is so heated that it draws the blood from the head. But once, while out in the bush, my guide, a very black boy indeed, was, I think, very nearly going over. He did not turn pale, certainly. This would have been impossible, but he dipped his head in a pool, and kept it down so long that I began to think he had been crossed in love and meant to drown himself. I was about to draw him out by the legs when he jumped up, smiling.

'He ver' good,' he said, pointing to the water. Then he pointed at the sun. 'Sometime he good, sometime ver' bad man.'

Having thus delivered himself, he walked backwards for fully a mile. This, no doubt, was to save his spine from the tropical rays.

What a change from that fearful storm! This I well may say, and as our heroes roamed through the greenery and the flowery labyrinths, the sky was bright above them, and a few rolling clouds, like banks of snow, only made its blueness bluer. Beautiful birds flitted from bush to bush, ran along under, or sat still on a branch and pretended they were flowers —not worth shooting, and not good to eat.

But I am glad to tell you that Jack and Allan were not going after elephants. To shoot those wonderfully wise animals in their beautiful jungles is the most

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cruel and therefore the most cowardly sport on the face of the earth. Yet I have seen ere now a British officer shoot a mother with a calf by her side. The leg was broken, but in her agony she placed her trunk lovingly across her offspring, and looked at the enemy with pleading eyes that in their expression were more than human.

Though the excursion on which our heroes had now started would be one of ten days or more, it would hardly give them time to see the wildest and most beautiful scenery in this wonderland of an island. Besides the guide, they had carriers with them who trotted along with the provisions and heavy baggage —if heavy baggage, hammocks and rugs with cooking utensils could be called. They had spare rifles in case of emergency, but their principal object was to see a portion of the country, and just shoot enough game to supply their wants from day to day.

Their guide's orders were to strike straight away for the least inhabited, but most wildly beautiful part of the country. The man readily consented. He marched in what might be called a bee line: often through most charming woods and flowery jungles; sometimes fording a rapid stream, getting wet but soon getting dry again; round sun-kissed lakes, smooth and dark, dimpled by the motions of leaping fish and

'O'er-hung by wild woods thickening green.'

Some of the way was indeed toilsome to trace, but they managed to walk on an average twenty miles a day, with a good hour's rest at noon, and pausing here and there to shoot teal or other wild duck for supper, with sometimes a little pig.

They were good campers-out, and had not forgotten

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the salt nor anything else that would add to their comfort. Quinine wine was found handy in swampy districts, but Jack Smith usually managed to pitch for the night on elevated ground.

Then hammocks were hung while daylight still existed, a fire was lit, and the provisions were cooked. They found the gipsy plan of roasting teal the quickest and handiest. Having disentrailed them, they were wrapped in leaves and clay, with a reed to let out the steam, and done in fiery ashes. The reed would be burned away, but the steam-hole was not blocked.

The young pig was splendid, and needed little condiment. It savoured of the very breath of the luxuriant forests.

Towards darkening, when the gorgeous colours of the sunset had died away and the birds had gone to roost, the woods still rang with the discordant notes of the monkeys; but our heroes soon got used to these, to the startling cries of night birds, and to the huge black bats that flitted hither and thither in the starlight.

The heat in that part of the island where they camped at last was nothing extraordinary, and the wild scenery was not only beautiful but sublime.

They made this spot their head quarters for many days, going forth every morning to wander and shoot and fish, taking luncheon with them, and returning an hour or two before sundown to camp. They would sit and talk about home and former adventures till wellnigh midnight, while now and then Rory would play; and indeed his droll sayings made him the life and soul of the party.

But one day poor Rory had an adventure which

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wellnigh cost him his life. With all an Irishman's pluck and daring, he wandered away in the afternoon on a cheetah's[1] tracks. He soon came across the gentleman himself, growling under a bush. Rory had never seen such a monster before, but showed no fear.

'Be it hog, dog, or fiend ye are,' he said, 'I'll have a shot at you.'

But the cheetah made off, Rory following at the run with rifle on trail. He found himself after a time on somewhat elevated forest land, and here, to his terror, he saw, not one leopard, but a little crowd. Probably no boy ever got up into a tree so quickly before.

'It isn't funk,' he told himself, flatteringly; 'it is only rest that I 'm needing.'

He could not resist the temptation, however, of firing into the centre of the strangely pretty group, who were sitting or standing in every attitude of grace. But he hit nothing, and the animals, growling and crying, speedily shifted camp.

'Well,' he said, 'I've spoiled that little garden-party anyhow. So I'll rest a bit, and soon get back to camp.'

He started next minute in real fear, for some creature right away above him emitted a sound which was partly yawn and partly growl.

'As sure's I'm alive,' he said, as he began to sweat, 'there's a wild baste right on top av me. Keep up your courage, Rory. Don't go down the tree. It's a bear, that it is; and if you bolt you're done for.

[1] A species of spotted leopard common in Ceylon, but differing somewhat from those in India proper.

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Sure it isn't your mother's son that's afraid of anything.'

He waited and waited a weary time, and the shades of evening fell. Then there was a rustling among the branches overhead, an awful growl of rage, and, on looking up, he could see a big hairy face, white flashing teeth, and a pair of fierce fiery eyes that glared at him, causing his hair to stand on end. But he fired point-blank—and missed. The brute now sprang past him, over him, and, alighting safely on the ground, disappeared among the lower trees.

'Heigho!' sighed Rory, 'my bedroom's booked for the night, and it's in it I am, for sure I couldn't see a foot before me now, and I don't know the way home at all at all. I'll say a bit av a prayer, load me gun again, and try to go to sleep.'

It was not the first time the boy had slept in a tree, but that was far away in bonnie Erin. After a time, curious to say, he did fall asleep, and his dreams were ugly enough; but his awakening was worse.

Not twenty yards from his tree a fire of wood was burning, and around it squatted nearly a score of the fiercest-looking savages he had ever read of. They were a tribe of wandering Veddahs, harmless enough as a rule, but fierce and dangerous when interfered with. They were roasting a little deer. The odour that reached Rory's nostrils was very agreeable.

'It's mesilf wouldn't mind a bit av that same,' he said, *sotto voce*. 'Be quiet, will ye, Rory,' he added; 'is it that you'd like them to take the deer down and hang yourself up to be cooked instead? Don't make enough noise to wake a waisel.'

About an hour after this, when it was very dark

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indeed, Rory, who had been as quiet as a church-mouse hitherto, suddenly said to himself: 'Och, by this and by that, what is to become av me? I want to sneeze and I—I—aitchow—ow!'

Every wretched black started to his feet on the spot, and in the light of the fire made a rush for the tree. Rory saw what was to happen now. He would be bludgeoned and hacked about with knives till dead. So he determined to meet the difficulty halfway.

His Celtic blood was up, and he felt no fear now. 'Hooroosh! Whoop!' he shouted. '*Erin go bragh!* Who's afraid?'

He slid down, and confronted them with pointed rifle. Back they reeled with yells of fear and anger. They had seen 'fire-sticks' before now, so they stood still, trying to urge each other on to the combat. Rory now did the best thing he could have done. He lowered his gun and advanced with a newly made smile on his face.

'No shoot,' he cried; 'good, good!'

Whether they understood him or not I cannot say, but he was allowed to come quite up to the horrible circle. He pointed to the roast deer and then to his mouth. They understood, and in ten minutes' time Rory was squatting among the savages eating with his clasp-knife as heartily as any one could.

Supper ended, Rory could not guess what might happen next. It would be dangerous to remain among these only half-human wretches in the darkness of the dismal forest after the fire died down. Then he bethought him of his flute. He never went anywhere without that. But when he began to play *Kathleen Mavourneen* they began to roll their

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white eyes at each other, grimace, and sway their bodies in a manner that was ludicrous in the extreme.

For the life of him he could not help bursting into a hearty fit of laughing. But they urged him to play again. He treated them to a jig. This seemed to turn them frenzied. Round and round the fire they flew, tossing their arms in the air, lifting leg by leg as high as their chests, but in good time, wriggling their bodies and screaming.

Never had Rory seen so demoniacal a dance before, and he had no desire to see any such again. Then, threatening him when he dared to stop, they seized their knives and clubs and continued the circular reel till one by one dropped down exhausted.

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Great was the consternation and sorrow in camp when the hunters returned and found that Rory had not arrived. The supper was a very hurried one indeed, and then, leaving a Cingalese boy to keep the fire burning, the search was commenced.

It was midnight before—guided by the fire the savages kept burning—they found the poor Irish lad among his wild companions. They quickly rushed in, and with yells that awakened the monkeys the Veddahs fled into the darkness of their native woods.

Rory was safe, but so exhausted he scarce could speak. So ended the boy's midnight adventure, which, if not so wild as some I shall have to speak of later on, was wild enough for Rory.

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CHAPTER XII

THE SWORD-FISH AND THE WHALE

I HAVE afforded my readers only a mere peep at Ceylon, and a meagre one it is, but our adventures must take us here and there in many lands; we are sailors, we are wanderers, and stay but a brief time in any one place. Now the Livingstone was one of those ships that receive orders from home, after they reach certain ports, to proceed elsewhere. So that after a visit to Calcutta, the captain was not at all surprised to find that new sailing orders took him off to Japan. This was indeed a long voyage in itself, and they encountered more than one fearful storm. Sickness, too, broke out on board, and two poor sailors were sewn up in their hammocks and buried at sea.

'Tom has gone to Davy Jones's,' a messmate might say to his comrade, 'and we'll never see his like again.'

And in such a case as this, Jack, whether he belongs to the Royal Navy or the mercantile marine, is never ashamed to be seen taking the back of his rough hand athwart his face to brush away a tear.

But the fever was stayed at last, and by the time the Livingstone reached Japan all was well on board once more. Our heroes had many adventures in the towns or cities of Japan, but they were far more

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humorous than wild. But Japan is the land of flowers and the land of many delights, as well as of much that to us is both strange and curious.

. . . . . .

More sailing orders were awaiting the Livingstone here. She was to transfer her goods into the Stanley, homeward bound, while she herself must proceed in ballast to New Zealand, and thence to Valparaiso, then be homeward bound also. They had already been at sea for nearly a year and a half, and one more year at least must elapse before they would find themselves once again in the chops of the Channel, and on the shores of Merrie England.

The voyage to New Zealand was a very long, somewhat tedious, but certainly not uneventful one. Storms and calms, tropical rains and sunshine, and weeks of dismal darkness by night, when neither star nor moon shone to cheer their hearts. What a mere speck she would have looked, could she have been but seen from a distance in the midnight watch—toiling on, rolling on, over that dreary waste of waters!

Would it never, never have an end? It seemed interminable, and, with the exception of the albatross or frigate-bird, scarcely was a creature to be seen. And seldom, if ever, a ship. At all events, Allan's log-book gives no account of any such glad record until they are nearing our great southern continent.

Now, as to New Zealand, at which they arrived at last, I do not intend to say much. Some day I may, for it is, or rather its islands form, a capital field for emigration; and boys who are hardy, healthy, and strong may often make their fortunes here. Indeed, if they are willing to work they are sure to, but they

must place one foot firmly on Fortune's ladder, and scale its toilsome steps one by one.

Moreover, it is a splendid country, and a rising one, and our heroes found it so. They were exceedingly well received at Dunedin, and had many days' good sport, but nothing that could be termed a wild adventure. They made so many friends here, however, that they were sorry to leave.

The time fled fast enough away, and one morning, all business being transacted, it was 'Up anchor and eastward ho!' It is true enough they were now 'homeward bound,' but that English home was indeed a long, long way off. They must get round the world to seek for it, calling first at the city of Valparaiso, on that mighty continent, South America.

. . . . . .

One day, long after their leaving New Zealand, and while in mid-ocean, they witnessed a battle which it falls to the lot of only few mariners to view. I do not myself quite know all the habits of that wonderful creature, the sword-fish (*Xiphias gladius*, if you *will* have its Latin name). My own impression is that it is to be met with in most seas, for, like the whale, it is a very great wanderer.

I do happen to know, however, that—armed as it is with that deadly weapon, the prolongation of the upper jaw into a sword—it feels itself commissioned, like the naval officer, to go anywhere and do anything. It sometimes grows to the length of nearly twenty feet. The biggest shark that ever basked in the sunshine, or hid in the black waters of the far north sea of ice, would have no chance against it, for it is exceedingly fierce and active.

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The colour of this monster of the deep is a beautiful silvery-grey beneath, with a grey or blue tinge in the back. The speed with which it can dash or dive through the water—almost noiselessly—is marvellous. This is owing to its shape and its immense strength, and I think if a submarine torpedo-boat could be built on the same lines, she might easily destroy a whole fleet.

I think that sword-fish are to be found in the ocean thirty feet long and over, and a creature of this length displaying itself in sport on or near to the surface of the water might easily be put down by superstitious sailors as the great sea-serpent. A sword-fish, if 'in its tantrums,' will put to flight a whole shoal of dolphins or the smaller kinds of whale. It appears to me that it spears these more for the sake of sport than anything else.

But 'to our tale,' as Burns says. It was a bright and beautiful day, with never a cloud in the pale blue sky, when an immense whale was sighted some distance on the starboard bow. The ship was hardly moving a knot an hour through the all too placid water, when the hail came from aloft.

All glasses were immediately turned towards the beast. At that moment she was calmly ploughing her way northwards on the surface of the water. But, lo! while Jack, Allan, and others were still watching this lonely leviathan, she leapt clean and clear out of the water, with curled tail and awful head on high. The commotion she made on again touching the water was fearful and wonderful to behold. Her way was completely stopped, and for a few moments she lashed the sea with her tail in seeming

agony. Anon she dived in desperation, leaving the frothy waters tinged with blood.

When hurried or excited, it is impossible for a whale to remain any great length of time under the water without being drowned, and presently this leviathan came up with a dash again, now much nearer to the ship. And then all hands could see that she was battling with an exceedingly large and ferocious sword-fish.

The whale's only weapon of defence was the tail, and one blow from this would kill the biggest sword-fish in the ocean. But right deftly and swiftly did this fish dodge the blows, and pierce its enemy in every vulnerable spot. The sword-fish could be distinctly seen amidst the chaos of froth and blood and spume; and the noise of the battle of giants might have been heard many and many a league away, for each time the mighty tail descended the sound was like a clap of thunder.

Then came a moment of comparative peace, and the sword-fish went ploughing away.

'The brute has had enough!' ventured Allan.

'No, no,' said the captain; 'the sword-fish has but retired to gain strength for the final stab.'

'Look—look!' cried Jack.

You could see the ripple in the water as the enemy returned. You could hear even the plunge of its sword. Then blood and foam spouted high in air, and the great whale lay dead and still. The victorious enemy retired when its dreadful work was completed, for sword-fish are vegetarians.

Then slowly sank the whale to the sea's dark depths. In a day or two the carcase would float

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again, and be driven before the current to the shore of some distant isle, there to afford food for savages for weeks and weeks. For the natives of the green islands of the Southern Pacific are not averse to eating their meat a trifle high.

The wind got up in a few days' time, and the ship made good her passage till within some forty miles of Valparaiso, when one of the most terrible calamities befell her that can ever happen at sea. I may mention that the captain was a most careful man as regards fire. The fire-hose could be turned on at any time, and, with the help of the donkey-engine, the ship could soon be almost flooded fore and aft. Moreover, this was not all, for light fire-buckets of good size were placed on each deck, and hung in positions where the men could easily reach them.

There is one night that will ever remain like a terrible dream in the minds of Allan and Rory at least. It must have been nearly two bells in the middle watch, for Allan had just looked at the time by the light of the moon, in order to be sure, for it was part of his duty to see that the bells were struck, or to strike them himself.

The boys had been talking together amidships, as they leaned over the bulwarks—talking not only of old times, but of the future, and of the glorious holiday they meant to give themselves when they returned. Rory, during the present long cruise, had received only one letter from his uncle, and there was very little news in it, but much good old-fashioned advice. One extract I may give:

'You'll need to tak' good care o' yersel', laddie, and dinna be rash. It was an unco like thing o' you

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to get on board as ye did, but your captain has forgi'en you, you tell me. Weel, Rory, God is far mair merciful than ony ship's captain, so never forget to say your prayers, and dinna get wet feet. I houp ye have plenty o' dry stockins. Tak' good care o' they awfu' beasts the whales. Scripture can prove they're no canny. If one was to swallow you, we'd see nae mair o' you, Rory; for though you're no an ill laddie, you're no a prophet, and there would be no casting of you up on dry land. The country here is lookin' bonnie, and the turnips closin' o'er the drills, and the taties a' in bloom. Weel, laddie, tak' good care o' yoursel. Trust in the Lord, and dinna gang ower near the edge o' the boat.'

. . . . . .

But Allan had gotten many letters from his mother, from Ailie, and from Uncle Jack. Uncle's were very much to the point, and Ailie always inquired about the poor 'mitherless bairn,' Rory. And this used to delight the Irish lad very much indeed.

'Och!' he was saying to-night, 'sure isn't it the proud boy I should be, to have your swate sister Ailie to think a thought about the orphan child?'

But what a heavenly night this was! There was just wind enough to fill the sails—no more—and the sea was rippled, but silent. High up yonder shone a moon clear almost as sunlight, and the few stars that studded the heaven's dark blue were like little dots of electric light; a triangle of moon-rays pointed towards the ship, and went broadening away and away till its base reached the horizon.

But, see, what is the matter with Tronso? This strange, wise, Irish terrier was galloping fore and

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SOUNDING THE ALARM OF FIRE AT SEA.

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aft in a state of great excitement, staying for a moment here and there, to scrape at the decks with his forefeet, then rushing up to his master, whining pitifully, and even barking.

'Hush! hush! Tronso, you'll waken the watch below. It's time to strike two bells, Rory.'

He looked towards his companion, who had suddenly clutched him by the arm. There was terror in his blue eyes, the light of which Allan had never witnessed there before.

'Oh, Allan! don't you smell smoke? The ship is on fire!'

The smoke next moment made itself evident to the senses of both smelling and sight. Curling up the fore-hatch it came, and melted in the air. Allan flew to the bell—not to strike two—but to sound the dread alarm of fire at sea.

Men were suddenly awakened from pleasant dreams below, and the terrible sound mingled confusedly in the minds of others, and caused dreams, from which they suddenly were aroused, and sprang from hammock or bunk to seize their clothes and hurriedly dress. The captain came up in his pyjamas. From bowsprit to binnacle every soul was now on deck, and for a time the din was terrible.

Then the skipper himself with his trumpet commanded all hands to 'lay' aft. There was the trampling of feet, then silence, as they stood around him. His voice was clear as a bell, but no token of fear was there. No one could have spoken more calmly or deliberately; and this gave the men courage, or roused the courage that lies deep in the heart of every true-born Briton.

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Then quickly but quietly the captain appointed every man and officer to his station, and ordered the fire-hose to be rigged at once.

'It may be a struggle for life,' he said, 'so work in silence and with method.'

The cargo, which was light at present, had somehow got heated, and caught fire in one of the foreholds; and although the men did all that human effort could accomplish, they were soon beaten back from the fore part of the vessel, which was now well alight.

She was kept before the wind, but the foremast was stripped of its lower sails. The men obeyed their captain—they kept calm and silent, but every now and then an officer's clear voice could be heard giving an order. Allan was commanding his men, but working himself like a slave, and Rory, too, did excellent service.

In spite of every effort, however, the flames soon caught the middle decks. Then came the order to batten down, so that, if possible, the smoke might extinguish the flames; for down below, so great was the draught or suction of wind that the men were almost drawn into the fire. The ship was battened down, and sternsails set alow and aloft.

Oh, if the wind would only rise! But it seemed only getting calmer. The decks were now scuppered enough to admit the nozzles of the hose, and the men grew more hopeful. The steward came with drinks, and the brave fellows, some of them almost dropping with fatigue, were refreshed.

The captain never once lost his presence of mind, although he and a few others knew well that aft

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beneath the quarter-deck gunpowder and ammunition were stored in considerable quantity. The men continued to fight the flames, but a detachment was soon told off to lower the boats and have everything in readiness. Valuable papers, with all the ship's money, provisions and water, were placed in these, and all was in readiness to leave the apparently doomed ship at a word.

I cannot myself say for certain whether it was the scuppering of the decks and pouring down of volumes of water, almost immediately to be resolved into steam, which caused the catastrophe that followed. Be that as it may, true it is that while most of the officers were still busy aft, a roar like an explosion of heavy guns took place, the ship was shaken fore and aft, and on rushing on deck and forward, Captain Court and those with him stood on the brink of a yawning, fiery, chaotic furnace.

Oh, what a sight! The foremast gradually lowering itself till it fell with a crash over the side; burning timbers; smoke and steam down yonder; the great winch sliding end on into the burning abyss; and, awful to relate, the bodies of men, limbs, and tortured, writhing faces, dead, we must hope, and only tossed about thus by the movements of the burning and ever-shifting timbers. Not a moment to lose now! The jibs had caught fire, and other sails, and the vessel was no longer steerable.

'Courage, lads, courage now! Calmness alone can save us!'

The man at the wheel, good soul, was the last to leave his post, for he still struggled to keep the burning ship before the light wind.

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The captain was the last on deck.

Away went three boats, the men seemingly now struck to the heart with mortal terror—for the excitement of battle, whether with fire or foemen, is ever followed by depression.

But one boat, the dinghy, did not follow. She had become entangled in the wreck of the fallen mainmast.

'Easy, men, easy!' cried the captain, and the men almost lay on their oars. They were sadly pumped.

All eyes were on the burning ship. The mizen was shimmering red against the sky, smoke and flames in tongues, that played and darted here and there among the smoke which rolled darkling over the ocean.

Then another explosion! Burning planks were hurled after the retreating boats, and fell hissing into the sea. Explosion followed explosion; then, with an awful plunge, down went the doomed ship, and all that remained on the surface was her charred and broken timbers, with a cloud of smoke and steam, quickly dispersed by the now rising breeze. The boats closed up.

'Remain here,' the captain said to two, 'while we go back. Perhaps some poor fellow is still afloat.'

It must not be supposed that during the terrible scenes on board Allan had forgotten, or did not think about, the brave little dog Tronso, who had been the first to give the alarm. Who knows but that, had Allan understood his first actions, the ship might have been saved? But Tronso was among the missing.

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CHAPTER XIII

A NEW HERO

SILENCE, but no signs of a living thing at the spot where the Livingstone had gone down! The captain's boat was rowed over the place again and again, and at last the boat was put about and they began rowing slowly and sadly back.

'Look!' cried Allan, who was steering—'Look! what is that black spot in the moon's wake yonder, making towards us?'

'It must be a man,' said the captain. 'Give with a will, lads.'

The little black spot was Tronso's head. He was speedily taken on board, and his joy at seeing his master once more safe and sound was so great that, as he caressed him, the tears sprang to the boy's eyes. Ah! but a boy is none the less brave because his eyes may often fill with tears.

At the muster it was soon evident that the loss of life was greater than at first imagined. Both mates had perished. They had died on duty. Of the junior officers, poor Peter had gone, and so had seven men besides.

'They will never be heard of again,' said the captain solemnly to Allan, who sat beside him,

'Till the sea gives up its dead.'

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The boats were ordered together now, and standing there in the stern-sheets of his own boat, his face looking pale in the moonlight, the breeze playing with his dark hair, the 'old man' thanked his men for their courage and valour, and for their devotion to duty and obedience to command.

Then he said simply, 'Men, let us pray.

No book had he to guide him. He needed none. Then thoughts of the dead and thanksgiving for the living welled up from the depths of an overflowing heart, and not from his only, but from the hearts of all who heard him.

. . . . . .

Let us drop the curtain just here on that solemn moonlight seascape. It is not good for us to think or dwell too much on the sorrows of this world. When we are inclined to, let us muse rather on the joys of the far, far beyond.

Besides, dreadful though it may be to read of shipwreck and battles on sea or land, it is some little comfort to remember that whether he falls amidst the carnage of contending armies, or sinks in storm and darkness among merciless waves, a man has only once to die, and he bears but his own burden, bears it singly; and the eyes that close in death—may we not hope?—shall open in peace in a better land.

. . . . . .

One of the chief pleasures of Uncle Jack's life at the Castle of Indolence was the reading of his morning paper. Sometimes he was so anxious to get it that he would go a long distance to meet its bearer.

'Lazy young dog!' he would say to the boy, though half in fun; 'I've a good mind to place you

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in the donjon keep, where you'll have no other companions but crawlin' toads and slimy creepies. Here, then, is something to buy jibry with, but don't be late again.'

The shipping news column was always the first he scanned. One beautiful summer morning, while the sea sparkled in the sunshine, and there was bird-song, gleesome and sweet, in every bush and young fir-tree in his well-kept garden, uncle sat himself down as usual in his arbour and slowly opened the broad sheets. Then he started visibly.

'Bless my soul! Dear, dear me!' he said half aloud. 'This is dreadful—awful!'

'BURNING OF THE BRITISH SHIP LIVINGSTONE. FEARED LOSS OF ALL HANDS.'

The paper dropped on the ground, and for long, long minutes this brave old sailor sat confused and dazed.

'Loss of all hands!' he muttered to himself more than once. 'Death by fire, by falling yards, by drowning. Oh, it is too terrible! Heaven help me! How can I break the news to sister and little Ailie? I *cannot*.'

Then a happier thought seemed to strike him. He arose and entered the orlop deck, where breakfast was just laid.

'I'll just have a hurried snack,' he told the steward, 'before the rest come down. Tell your mistress I am going off to see Tom Stunsail, and may try his new boat before the wind drops.'

Surely this was a subterfuge that would be forgiven. He was desirous of doing all for the best, but could

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not have met his sister with such a load of grief at his heart and with its shadow on his usually open brow. He did not take long to breakfast. His appetite was clean gone. Then off he started.

'I'll just sing under sister's window a verse or so. If she hears that—and she's sure to—she won't suspect anything.'

Sure to! I should rather say she would. Deaf indeed would any one be who even in their sleep could not hear Jack's rolling sea-born voice.

'The busy sails the crew un-bend-ing,
The ship in harbour sa-afe arrived;
Jack Oakem, all his perils e-end-ing,
Had ma-a-de the port where Sa-ally lived.'

Then lighting his pipe and tucking the newspaper carelessly under his arm, Uncle Jack walked smartly off, and soon reached the house where his old friends lived. They were on their balcony, yarning.

'Ship ahoy!' shouted Jack.

'Aye, aye,' was the hail in return.

'Why, uncle, you've turned out early! Did you turn in all standing——?'

'No, no, but bring yourself to anchor again, Tom. Here's fearful news!'

Carefully adjusting his spectacles, Tom read it, and quietly handed the paper to his brother salt.

Then all sat dumb.

'Indeed, indeed, we feel for you,' began Sam at last, 'but——'

'Oh—I know—I know, men, there is nothing to be done—nothing, nothing!'

'Just one thing,' said Bernard.

'And that is?'

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'Don't let the ladies see the papers.'

'Oh dear! Oh dear!' sighed uncle. 'I'm such a poor hand at deception. I'm sure I'll make a mess of it, and if the mother finds out that her only boy is gone, she'll never smile again.'

'Come for a sail,' said Tom—'a long sail. My new boat is a ripper!'

This was agreed to, and in another hour they started, after sending a message home to say they must not expect him till six, and that his friends would be with him.

Ailie and her mother saw the boat with her white jib and mainsail go dancing past eastwards over the sunny sea, waved their handkerchiefs, and had return salutes.

These sailor men made quite a long day of it; but uncle's heart sank as they neared the harbour again in the evening. The first to meet them was the lightning conductor, as they called the telegraph boy.

'A message for you, sir.'

'For *me*?' said Jack, taking it with trembling hands. 'What can it be, I wonder?'

'Here!' cried Tom, 'let me see.'

'Listen. "Handed in at Buenos Ayres. June 7, 5 p.m. Just arrived here. Safe. Livingstone burned. Many perished.—Allan Adair."'

'Read it again,' cried uncle, with quivering voice and tear-filled eyes. 'R-r-read it again, my lad.'

'Blessed be His holy name!' he said presently.

'Come, boys, we'll have coffee here, and then go up to the Castle.'

. . . . . .

That was indeed a happy night at the old windmill,

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and there was still a happier evening when Allan himself came home, just six weeks after, and with him his first sea-friend, Jack Smith. Rory had been invited, but Rory would not come.

'It's not my place, I know,' he said, 'and it's my place I manes to keep.'

Need I say how happy all hands were, or need I tell you that it took over a fortnight for Allan—Jack had gone home—to tell his mother and sister one-half of all he had seen and suffered in his long and adventurous cruise? Nor may I speak of the many pleasant trips brother and sister had at sea in Tom's boat, or with old man Muggins.

Rory had gone away to the bonnie Highlands, and Allan, with Uncle Jack and Ailie, followed in a few weeks' time. A new ship was in preparation for the captain, and Allan's leave was a long one, therefore; for having now made up his mind to become a sailor, he thought he would wait and sail with his old skipper. He had to read hard, however, even when in the Highlands, in the dear old haunts by the rock-bound banks of queenly Tay.

Rory was always with them now. His reverence and his adoration—I can call it by no other name—for Ailie were astonishing, and indeed it sometimes bordered on the ridiculous. There were some sparks of old Irish chivalry still in Rory's heart.

'Och!' he told Allan once, though not in Ailie's presence; 'it's the happy boy I am to have you and your sister too—the whole dear lot of the two of you.'

It will be noted that Rory was improving a little in his English.

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When Ross McLean, who had been on the Continent, joined them one day with his grand dog Vasto, who was now three years old, their surprise was only equalled by their joy. Ross had been travelling in Poland—the Poland that was—and in Russia.

His reports concerning the latter country were most favourable. This missionary had even been received at court, and had made an impression. He had not gone alone, however, for when travelling in Skye, and while visiting that wondrous extinct volcano called Quivaing, he had met with a young and very handsome Russian baron.

Sitting or reclining on the great grassy table that rises in the centre of this volcano he was, and beside him a huge and beautiful Grecian greyhound or Borzoi. As white as the summer snow on the Scottish mountains was she, long-haired, and of remarkable intelligence. Ross had his Great Dane with him.

The two dogs had rushed growling to meet each other in mortal combat, and the missionary trembled for the greyhound's fate. But the stranger—who, by the way, albeit the weather was warm, wore a walking coat bound with fur—lay still.

'Fear not, friend,' he said, smiling; 'never in canine circles, but only in human, does a lady and a gentleman quarrel and fight.'

Vasto and Czarina were soon playing together around the grassy plot as if they had known each other from puppyhood, and their masters were speedily engaged in deep conversation.

'In some measure,' said Czarina's master, 'you are like myself, you have come up into this marvellous mountain without a guide.'

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'"Tis because I hate guides,' said Ross, 'with their horribly intoned voices and stereotyped language. Alone I can think, muse, and admire; with a guide I can only get angry and tired.'

'I am a Russian,' said Ranzikoff, 'and nearly always tired. Some doctors do say my heart is weak, and bid me not to climb hills.'

'Therefore you do it?'

The baron laughed. 'That is so,' he said.

Then he sighed as he continued: 'At home, though a baron, I was poor. I travelled; I visited the Holy Land, Turkey, England, America. Here I plunged into business. Nothing to lose, a chance of winning, and, alas! now I am oppressively rich. Business is a lottery. I worked to keep me from thinking of the language of the ugly doctor who had condemned me to die. Bah! I love not your doctors. I view them not as men, but as ghouls.'

Ross was laughing now. 'I myself,' he said, 'do not care for doctors, except after dinner. Over the walnuts and wine, you know.'

Then this rough but kindly missionary told our young friends that he and Baron Ranzikoff had formed an alliance, as it were, and had travelled in many lands together, and that they would in a few months' time start once more to 'do' Europe far more thoroughly.

He said, too, that the baron was as brave as any Gordon Highlander, and that, having improved greatly in health, he had gone to Russia now to see to his estate and to almost entirely renovate his castle home by the banks of the dark-rolling Dnieper. All this was very interesting indeed to both Allan and

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Ailie, to say nothing of Rory, who sat enthralled as he listened to Ross's strange story.

'It was undoubtedly the two dogs, however,' said Ross, 'that commenced our friendship, and now it is so well cemented that I think nothing can break it.'

. . . . . .

When our youngsters went back once more to Uncle Jack's romantic home, Ross came with them, and during his stay the time flew past on swallows' wings. Then came Allan's and Rory's orders to join the new ship, Badenscoth, with all possible speed. Then the cruel parting, the tears, the fears; but happily above all these, the blessed rays of Hope.

Ailie gave Rory her hand at parting. When far, far away at sea he would always mind its soft and gentle touch. He lifted his cap, and, bending, imprinted a kiss thereon; soft-hearted, but brave Rory!

For two years longer the boys Allan and Rory followed their avocations at sea; the former pushed on with his studies, and passed for mate before he was of age. But I have no intention of following the fortunes of the Badenscoth. They were simply those of a vessel in the merchant service. Many an up and many a down, storms, tempests, and calms; but altogether a lucky voyage, though two years in length.

Ailie not only loved her brother now, but she felt proud of him; he had grown so tall and handsome, and indeed she had grown up too. She considered herself no longer a child, though barely sweet sixteen. Because she was now so beautiful, Rory felt more afraid of her than ever. He would not have dared to kiss her hand.

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Yet was Rory himself no longer a boy. He had become a man even in years, for he was one-and-twenty. Moustache, did you ask? Yes, and a fairly good one too, which he had cultivated by shaving. It was not like the hair on a caterpillar's back, which some young men in town pride themselves upon.

And Rory had greatly improved in manner, speech, and dress. He still talked with an Irish accent; but I really think this is sweet—far nicer, surely, than the cockney who at a railway station asks you to buy a 'moaning piper.'

But Rory had risen in the world, and was on board the huge three-masted Badenscoth rated as the 'supercargo's' assistant. Right well and faithfully too did he do his duty.

. . . . . .

And now a change comes over the life-dream of our young heroes. I must tell you briefly about it.

Ross McLean had been in Scotland for many months travelling with his friend, and one might almost say younger brother, Baron Ranzikoff. The latter had conceived a very great liking, not only for Scotsmen, but for the

> 'Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
> Land of the mountain and the flood'

itself.

Well, it was early in spring when the Badenscoth reached port, and a week or more ere Allan and Rory had been able to clear and get free. This season is probably the sweetest of all the year in green Caledonia, when the woods and forests are alive with bird-song, and the most beautiful and delicate wild flowers are blooming everywhere.

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But when Uncle Jack, who, by the way, seemed to be getting younger every year, wrote and invited Ross and the baron—a letter to each—to visit his Castle of Indolence, and the baron to make the acquaintance of his sailor-nephew, neither hesitated a day.

Baron though he was, and rich, there was no pride about Ranzikoff, and he made himself in a few days' time as much at home in Uncle Jack's charming and romantic abode as though he had been born and brought up with the family.

But now out on the lawn on the lovely evenings, even those two old salts, Bernard and Stunsail, sat silent, as Ross and Ranzikoff told the simple stories of their travels and hunting adventures. They had no more eager listeners than Allan and Rory. The latter now always made one in the company. But the baron was very much struck with Aileen's innocent, almost childish beauty.

'Ah!' he said, 'the doctors condemn me to die of heart-disease. Pah! I live, and am getting stronger and ruddier every year.'

'Your heart is all right, baron,' said Ross, smiling; 'I wish ——'

But Ranzikoff interrupted him:

'Ah! yes, at present, brother; but were I to stay much longer here, would it not come to pass that I should have heart-disease of another kind? Miss Adair is but a child, I know, but—it is well I should go. I want to do something in the world. How proud would I not be, could I travel in wilder lands, and, having written a book, present it in person to the War-God—our Czar of All the Russias!'

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'That is a noble ambition!'

'Well, shall we not get ready and start?'

'My dear friend,' was Ross's reply, 'I am ready to make one of your party, and to face a whole world of adventures as soon as you are.'

'Amen!' said Ranzikoff, crossing himself with apparently more solemnity than the occasion demanded. He brightened up immediately, however. He lit a cigar, and leaning towards Ross—they were sitting with their dogs on a rock by the sea—'I have an idea, a happy thought,' he said eagerly. 'And now I will explain it.'

The sun was setting behind the western clouds when the two walked homewards to Castle Indolence, arm in arm, Vasto and Czarina coming on side by side in the rear.

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CHAPTER XIV

IN A DEN OF RATTLERS

EVEN were the story I am now penning all fiction and folly instead of Nature's truth, what other ending could I invent to the frequent intercourse between the baron, Ross, and our heroes Allan and Rory? The two former, then, agreed to take the two latter on a long and adventurous cruise into many parts of the world. And the boys—may I not still call them so?—went half wild with the joy that was flooding their hearts. Latterly Uncle Jack was taken into confidence. He considered the matter in all its bearings, and finally came to the conclusion that it would be good for Allan to see the world in a manner which it fell to the lot of few to enjoy.

'Now, Baron Ranzikoff,' he said, 'bother my sea-boots if I don't think I shall go with you myself, if you'll take me. I'm many years younger than I was six years ago, though you mightn't believe it, and I've some gold left in my ditty-box yet.'

'So say no more,' said the Baron Ranzikoff. 'But oh, is it not to be delighted in, that we shall all make but one family!'

'My sister, I know,' continued uncle, 'will not object, because it will be for my good. I want to

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roam the world a few years more ere I settle down for good; and those fine old salts, my friends Bernard and Stunsail, shall give up their house for a time and live in my orlop deck; so no burglars need be feared in Castle Indolence.'

'But now,' said Ross, 'as we have a parson in the roving party, we need also a surgeon.'

'Not a doctor! No, no, Brother Ross.'

'A surgeon, Brother Ranzikoff. And I know the man, the brave fellow who sailed with Allan on both his long and eventful voyages.'

Ranzikoff agreed at once. So beneath is a list of the party that were about to travel into some of the wildest portions of the globe:

(1) The baron,
(2) Uncle Jack,
(3) Surgeon Grant,
(4) The Rev. Ross McLean,
(5) Allan,
(6) Rory,

and lastly the Borzoi Czarina, Vasto the Great Dane, and plucky little Tronso, the fighting Irish terrier.

Ross, the baron, and Uncle Jack went in a few days' time to London to get ready the outfit, and no hour was lost in making every requisite preparation for an expedition into many lands and across many seas.

But be it remembered that every one was enthusiastic. Dangers they would have to encounter, and in all likelihood numerous would their adventures be; but what signifies danger to the brave?

I really do not remember at the present moment any one of our best British sports that is without

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a spice of danger, and this very fact makes them all the more enticing to a man who *is* a man, or to the boy who hopes some day to be a man.

. . . . . .

The night before our heroes left to join a ship at Liverpool was a very sad one for poor Ailie. It was one of the most beautiful ever I remember to have seen on the southern shores of England. Ailie could not bear to have her brother a minute out of her sight, and when he proposed a stroll out of doors she readily went with him. She bore heavily on his arm, and spoke but little. Had she spoken much, the tears would have flowed all too freely. She kept up as bravely as she could, but promised herself the luxury of a good cry when she retired for the night to her little room.

The round moon shone *so* brightly over the sea, there was not a breath of wind, and loudly in the copse sang the nightingale. But Ailie saw not the moon. She heard not the sweet voice of Philomel. Still, the beauty of this evening would return to her in thought by day or in dreams by night, when Allan was far, far away.

. . . . . .

When the curtain once more rises, we find that our 'braves,' as the North-American Indians call, or did call, in old story-books, their fighting men, have resolved themselves into a party, not of explorers, but of hunting-men. They are no ordinary tourists, such as the tender-foot fellows who, having been left a little fortune, go out to the Far West of the Land of the Free, straight from, probably, the back of an English counter or a barber's shop.

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No; our friends are not tender-feet, and from Allan upwards every one here knows just how to handle a gun, pitch a tent, hang a hammock, or bivouac with comfort and safety even on the bare ground. And they are after big game! And here at the foot of the Rocky Mountain range we find them all hale, hearty, and happy.

Of their journey from New York towards San Francisco I need say nothing. It is too tame a subject for myself and my readers. We like to be out and away, by mountain, stream, and forest, with the fresh winds blowing bracingly around us, and no sound to be heard at night save the cry of wolf or coyote, or the screams of wild birds issuing from the darkling woods.

Well, our gallant friends have surely nothing to complain about in this respect to-night. See them round the camp-fire, that has been lit in a glade in a pine-forest. Alas! in this very glade, eighty years ago, five American sportsmen, who had ventured too far into the country of the wily Indians, had been captured, tied to stakes, and tortured to death. It would hurt your feelings were I to tell you all the sad story as my soldier-grandfather told it to me. This one thing I may say, however, that the squaws were worse and more fiendish even than the braves, and that the Indian children were encouraged to hold burning brands in front of, but close to, the prisoners' eyes till they swelled and burst and their contents ran out. We live in happier times.

A little farther away, and still nearer to the forest, where through the tall dark tops of the trees therein the moon's rays are forcing a passage and falling in

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patches on the yellow sward beneath, the guides, half Mexicans, are cooking a light, savoury supper. You scarce could tell that yonder sturdy figure, reclining pipe in mouth, with the firelight flickering on his face, was Uncle Jack. No sailor rig does he wear now, but the roughest of backwoods hunting-suits. But all are dressed here pretty much alike, with one exception: Baron Ranzikoff still persists in wearing a ring of fur around his cap and a fur-trimmed jacket.

In the background two or three picketed horses are busy eating dry grass, and water stands ready for them to drink. Listen! For, mingling with the gentle sighing of the breeze among the pines, you can hear the rushing sound of a cascade that cannot be far away. Their guides as yet have turned out to be excellent fellows. The Baron has told them with a quiet smile that if they remain honest and faithful their reward will be great; if not, he will be obliged to shoot them.

'It is for you to choose,' he added, pointing to the head guide. '*Bueno—muy mucho remunerar. Malo—con presteza*——'[1]. He tapped his revolver by way of closing the sentence dramatically.

The bravos' Spanish was not the best, but those men saw the glance in his eye, and knew well what he meant.

Supper was laid, and all gathered round the piece of canvas that had to do duty as a tablecloth, and to confine the insects to the earth. Boiled roots, bread, fish, and game, the whole washed down with fragrant coffee. Yes; and these men ate more heartily far

[1] 'If good, your reward will be great. If bad, then quickly——'

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than any one can do who lives the indoor artificial life of the Briton at home.

Now round the fire they gathered once more, the elder to smoke, to sing, to yarn; the younger to listen and laugh. But, see, the moon is high above the trees. Uncle Jack takes out his watch.

'Baron,' he says, 'is it not time to turn in?'

Hammocks are slung for those who care for them; others, wrapped in rugs, sleep on the ground in sheets of canvas. But, wooed by the gentle breath of the night wind and murmur of falling water, all hands sleep well and soundly, and if they dream, their dreams are healthy and pleasant. To-morrow the journey will be resumed, and they will find themselves amidst scenery wilder far than this.

I need hardly say that at night sentries are set, for bears prowl around after dark. Wild enough these are, but no one knows that in these solitudes bands of wilder men may not be roaming, for far away in the Sierras there are dangers to be met with that we in tame domestic England little wot of.

The sounder one sleeps the more is he refreshed in a shorter time. Two hours before midnight, with four after it, if it be what we may call baby-sleep, strengthens the nervous system far more than tossing about and dreaming for ten or eleven hours would do. Uncle Jack was the first who turned out, and he immediately awoke the boys. They sat up for a moment, looking none too happy; then gazing around them at the dew-dripping trees and the mist-enshrouded mountains, they smiled, and out they sprang.

'I say,' Rory exclaimed, 'sure it's as chilly as a charity board meeting.'

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'Don't put on much,' cried uncle, 'but follow your leader.'

They didn't put on anything; they followed their leader in the garments of night, with the addition of shoes. No linen underclothing, however, did they wear by night, nor by day. Uncle Jack had taught them better. A long brisk walk through the woods, and nearly all uphill, brought them to a stream, which would be called a river in our conservative little country. It was dark, and overhung with weeping trees.

'Any alligators?' said Allan.

'If there be, we'll scare 'em,' replied uncle.

'Whoop!' he shouted, and in he plunged.

And the young fellows followed. What a glorious bath, to be sure! Hardly, however, could they hear each other's voices for the roar of a neighbouring linn.

They were nearly dressed, when Allan picked up a stone, and was about to heave it at a long-haired, bright-eyed little mortal, who was eyeing them from beneath a low bush.

'Hold, for mercy sake!' cried uncle. 'Bless my sea-boots, lad—don't you know that's a skunk, and if you struck him, or even startled him, we might as well stay in the river all day, for our messmates couldn't come near us!'

'Faith!' said Rory, 'it's eau-de-Cologne I should be preferring to that.'

They ran back all the way, or nearly so, and were delighted to find the whole camp astir, and breakfast ready.

No morning paper here, no early post, but merry

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chatter and laughter; every member of the expedition was as merry as the traditional sand-boy. Never seen a sand-boy, reader? But I have, and I am not sure the genus is even yet extinct. The sand is brought from the soft seaside, the boy has a little cart and a patient donkey, and the boy is always smiling, though the donkey isn't.

'Ony san' the day, wifie, fine saft san', a bucket for a tan (halfpenny), and I'll carry it upstairs for a cauld tattie, or a wee bittie o' bread for the cuddy?'

In another hour everything was ready for the march. The bronchos, or horses, were not heavily loaded, and far indeed from being buckjumpers. Patience and hardihood and surefootedness are their chief and best characteristics. Rory and Allan made much of them, but the poor beasts were more used to the lash than to tit-bits when at home.

The dogs were in great form, especially Tronso; but they had to be kept well to heel, lest they should go hunting on their own accord. To-day our heroes were determined to get as far and as high as possible through the wild country. They had already left behind them all traces of civilization in the shape of half-wild sheep, timber chutes and sawmills, and at the midday halt were in a savage but beautiful land. It was in the Southern Sierras they were travelling—truly a land of giant forests and shaggy woods.

Little undergrowth was there here, save the stunted 'etnach,' and in some places grass. But though the pines were often branchless till near the top, through which the beautiful sunshine was filtered, in other

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and more level lands the monster spruce-trees swept the ground with their branches, forming tents, as it were, that were dark even by day. As these are often the hiding-place of bears, wolves, or even cougars or American lions, our friends usually tried to avoid them, or the guides would rush forward fearlessly, beating the bush and shouting enough to scare a regiment of wild creatures.

By eventide, or just before sunset, the baron and the boys clambered a few hundred feet up into or on to a huge bare rock. What a wonderfully impressive scene was spread out before them far, far to the east! Rolling hills and lovely glens, wood and forest, lakes sparkling and rivers rolling silently in the sunshine. The purple mists of distance blushing with the grey-blue of the horizon, and streaks of beautiful clouds high over all. And the silence! The wind was hushed, and for a time scarcely a sound was to be heard.

Scrraik—scrrraik—rrrraik! There were more rr's in that awful sound than any one born south of the silvery Tweed could pronounce in a month of Sundays. Presently a huge rattler, thick and long, and gray or yellow, slid past them and disappeared round the corner. Another and another. The noise increased, but a kind of fascination seized Allan, and he followed, gun in hand, the last of the terrible creatures—followed as one glides after an apparition in a dream.

What a sight met his view! It was a hollow sunlit shelf of bare rock, but the clay behind was pierced with holes innumerable. On the shelves these fearful snakes lay in coils, and from almost every hole pro-

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truded a flat head, with yellow or colourless eyes and forked tongues darting in and out. Eyes that never closed and lipless scaly mouths.

'Run, boys—run!' shouted Allan.

What made him fire, I wonder? I know not, but he did so, point-blank into a coil of rattlers.

The scene that followed, the springing and leaping hither and thither of the awful creatures, was like a picture of Doré's from Dante's *Inferno.*

How all escaped clear I cannot tell. But they did. Meanwhile the rifle's ring resounding through the forest had awakened it. Bears growled or roared, deer ninnied plaintively, and wolves or coyotes, our boys could not tell which, made the woods resound with their howling and cries. Our heroes hurried back, and reached camp in time for supper.

For many days now they journeyed on and on, the guide behaving well, and the bronchos too, although many a long *détour* had to be made, to enable them to get into the higher regions more easily. Now be it remembered that it was not for sport alone that our people came out here, but more to see the wonders of Nature in a portion of one of the wildest and most mountainous regions in the world. But sport and adventures too came in their way, and indeed on their guns they depended, for the most part, for food.

But they had no intention of loading up their horses with trophies—skins, horns, and heads—for either pride or profit. They had already seen all the wonders of the Yellowstone Park, and it was the desire of Baron Ranzikoff to find a highland home in which to bivouac for a month or two at

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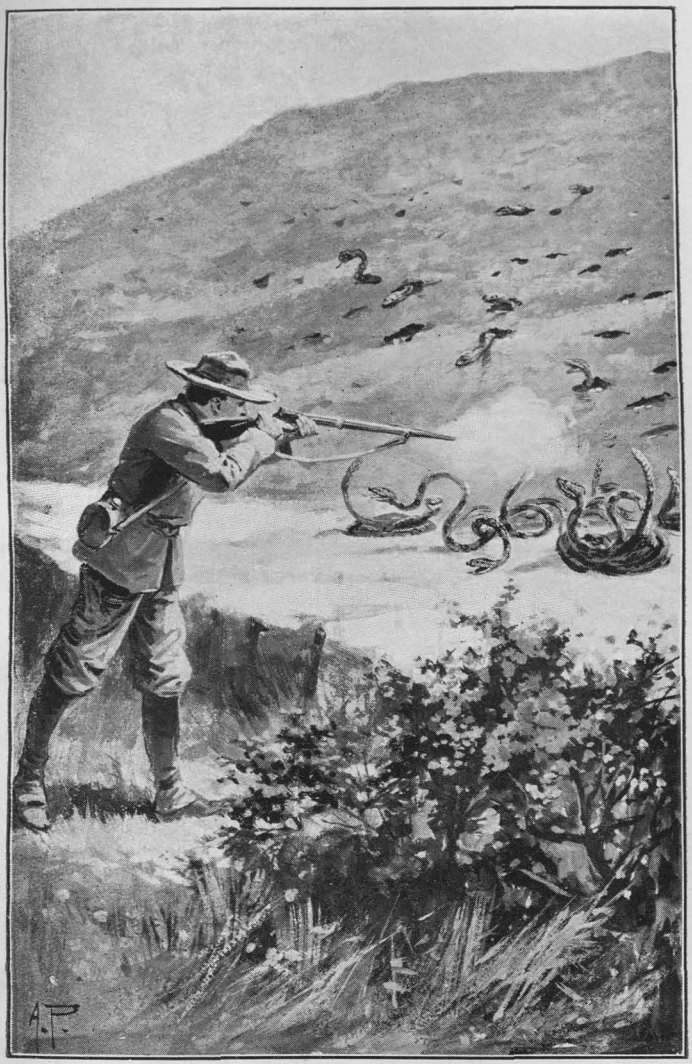

ALLAN FIRED POINT-BLANK INTO A COIL OF RATTLERS.

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least. Far to the north, though the mountains are not so high, the foliage and undergrowth are more abundant, and mosses and heath grow, whereas the regions they were now traversing more particularly deserve the name of Rocky.

But cañons and vast treeless plains made their journey with horses most dangerous and difficult. But the guides had been here many times and oft; so after a long and slow journey, but on the whole a delightful one, they found themselves on the banks of an upland lake, mostly surrounded by wild woods waving green, and affording grass enough for the bronchos, hunting for the most fastidious of sportsmen, and open spaces on which the lovely Czarina, bold Vasto, and funny wee Tronso could gambol till tired, without fear of snakes, for their dread of these was remarkable. Whenever Czarina had seen a rattler, all her courage seemed suddenly to have oozed out of her tail. She had sprung about twenty feet into the air, more or less, and fled like a streak of lightning.

A land of wild flowers, too, was this, of beauty and gorgeousness such as we seldom see in our country, while in the semi-darkness of the thickets of spruce grew splendid fungi, some of great beauty—crimson, or deep orange spotted with white, and so large that a fox could have squatted easily on one.

Many patches of these marvellous 'toadstools,' as the boys call them, presented almost all the colours of a beautiful sunset.

'Ha!' cried Baron Ranzikoff, when he beheld this beautiful glen, with grey rocky hills, half clad in pines rising on every side—'Ha! surely this is indeed

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a Valparaiso' (vale of Paradise). 'Uncle, what say you?—shall this be our home for a season?'

'I shall be delighted.'

'And so shall I, and I!' cried all.

The bronchos neighed when they saw the grass and succulent plants, and at Tronso's suggestion the dogs set off for a circular scamper; and so fast did they run that Rory could not help remarking, 'Why, it's a hairy hurricane they are, and nothing else in the world.'

. . . . . .

The first night was spent in open camp. They could hear bears growling in the woods, and wolves raising their strangely plaintive howlings, to say nothing of the cries of night birds and the mournful hooting of owls—everything, indeed, that betokened a hunter's paradise.

'How different,' said Allan, next morning at breakfast, 'from the scenery around Castle Indolence, uncle!'

'Ah! yes, lad; here we have a waving sea of green all about us, save yon bit of sunlit water. No blue ocean here; but the silence of this primaeval forest and our intercourse with Nature are surely ample reward for our journey hither.'

'And now,' said Ross, 'we must spend some days in forming a camp and solid shelter, for, from all I have read and from the rent and riven patches of forest we have passed at times, the storms must be terrible indeed.'

So all hands now set to work in good earnest to form themselves a village in these lonesome wilds.

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CHAPTER XV

A HOME IN THE WILDS

NOW McLean, during his many wanderings in foreign lands, had learnt by experience how to lay out a camp and build huts that would defy most storms. So he was unanimously elected as camp-fitter, and boss of the whole show. And for the time being every one else was at his beck and call.

Tools they had in plenty, so no time was lost in setting to work, the baron himself showing a most excellent example.

'Bravo! Baron Ranzikoff!' cried the doctor, as the Russian invalid made the woods resound and echo to the blows of his axe. 'Man! there's no muckle the matter wi' your heart.'

'Rejoiced, rejoiced!' was the baron's reply; and he burst into a strange outlandish song, which suited well, however, with the sound of his weapon.

They spent two whole hours at luncheon, and resting under the shadow of a spreading tree, for midday up here was exceedingly hot. But they worked all the harder for it, when the sun began to decline. After dinner they spent, not this night only, but many nights to follow, in song, in mirth,

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and merriment. Ross's stories were always worth listening to, and so was Rory's flute.

'By-the-by,' said the baron one evening to Allan, 'though I heard of your burning ship, I did not get the knowledge of how you escaped. Did you land?'

'No,' said Allan; 'and indeed we had a rough and a terrible time of it, for a breeze sprung up off the shore, which shortly increased to a gale, and as we lost both provisions and water, we were practically starving for three long days.

'No one ever thought he would see land again, or ever return to England. But at long last a British ship hove in sight.'

'Don't you remember, Rory, how wildly we shouted for joy?'

'Ah! that indeed, Allan; and poor Snell, who had been so mad till then that it took two men to keep him from leaping into the sea, broke down when he saw the ship, and wept as, sure, I'd never seen a man weep before.'

'That would have been the savin' o' him,' said the worthy surgeon.

'Indeed, then, and it is the truth I'm giving you, for when he had made an end of weeping he was as sane a soul as any of us.'

'We were landed at Valparaiso,' continued Allan; 'and though we could have paid our way, the good people of this beautiful city wouldn't hear of it. Never had I known before such real kindness. So after a week's rest we all got over the Andes in that marvellous railway, through the wildest scenery, and along the edges of cliffs that to look over would have turned a steeplejack giddy. Well, we got to Buenos

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Ayres safe and sound, and then home by steamer to dear old England once again.'

'Yes,' said Uncle Jack, 'and praised be His name for it! Never shall I forget that terrible morning when the loss of the Livingstone, with all hands, was reported!'

'Hark!' cried Ross. 'What is that? The horses are attacked. Hear how they plunge and scream!'

No need to draw attention to the fact. The poor animals were shrieking as only bronchos can when in deadly peril and terror. Every one started to his feet at once, and guns or rifles were quickly to the fore.

The nags had been picketed fully one hundred yards from the camp, and dangerously near to the forest—undoubtedly a great mistake. Out from the glare of the fire rushed Uncle Jack and the two boys, the others bringing up the rear. But though the stars shone clear and bright, they could at first see nothing.

'Wolves, I believe,' said Ross, overtaking the trio. 'Look, Uncle! there is a big dark beast on Pedro's back.'

'Yet we dare not fire. We should kill a horse.'

The screaming, the yelling, and plunging continued. But assistance was at hand. Something white as snow went flittering past. It was Czarina, and she was followed closely by Vasto.

Allan picked Tronso up in time, or assuredly he would have been in at the death—but that death would have been his own. Tronso seemed always to think that he was quite as large as Vasto, the Great Dane, and twice as brave. Uncle Jack fired

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his rifle in the air, in order to scare the wild beast or beasts, and save the dogs.

In vain, and the 'habbering' and roaring that speedily commenced showed that the dogs were engaged in mortal combat. It lasted for some time, getting farther and farther off, till at last it died away in the silence of the deep, dark forest.

Half an hour after this both those noble hounds returned gasping, with tongues hanging out, and with their coats dabbled in blood. But they were laughing with joy, as if they had been enjoying the greatest lark in the world.

Nothing could be done that night. But as the first rays of the sun changed the Rocky Mountain peaks into crimson, and the shadows began to fly away from misty cañon and glen, all hands turned out. Here were Vasto and Czarina coming slowly from the lake, with Tronso wheeling round them barking. A glance showed great gashes or rents in Czarina's sides, but Vasto was almost untouched. The surgeon, Grant, saw to the wounds, sewing them up and bandaging, and in a few days the poor dog was her own beautiful self again.

But on this particular morning a hunting party was got up to scour the woods. It consisted of all, save uncle, who stayed in command of the camp, and to help the Mexicans to dress the bronchos' wounds, which were bad enough in all conscience.

The dogs—Tronso was allowed to come to-day—led them straight down through the dense wood for fully a thousand yards, then stood barking by a spruce-fir to draw attention.

From the dark shade beneath, hard-fisted, athletic

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McLean dragged out a huge puma, or American lion. Reddish-brown was the dead monster in colour; similar, in fact, to the ground over which he hunted, and nearly five feet in length. But, for all this, hungry, or rather bloodthirsty, must the beast have been to attack a broncho. The puma's throat had been riven out.

The dogs received their due meed of praise and admiration, but Tronso only held head and tail a little higher.

'Pooh!' he seemed to say, 'I could have killed that pussy-cat myself. See me go for number two.'

And Tronso was no vain boaster, as will be seen.

'Where there is one lion,' said Ross, 'there are usually two. Let us make a circle, and sweep everything before us towards the centre.'

'A battue,' said Ranzikoff.

'Something like it.'

This was done. But though they passed much game that they cared not to shoot, it was three long hours before the circle closed near enough for them to shout to each other.

A louder whoop than any from McLean showed that they had treed the game—Mrs. Puma to wit.

'Poor beast!' he said sympathizingly, as Vasto looked aloft and barked; 'what a pity to kill her!—It is self-protection, though,' he added.

He was musing thus when the impetuous Scotch doctor rushed in.

He fired at once, and the puma came crashing down through the branches dead.

'Oh, doctor,' said McLean, 'that shot was mine.'

'Man, I'm sorry!' was the answer.

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'And why didn't you give me a chance?' said Vasto.

'And me?' barked Tronso, jumping on the Great Dane's back, a favourite seat of his.

The skins and heads of the two fierce beasts were preserved in rough salt and alum, brought for such purposes. And it appeared the forest was now cleared of lions.

This was not quite so, however, as several were seen after this, but they invariably ran, growling and roaring, glaring behind with their fierce, vindictive eyes every few seconds.

After one of these, early one morning, Rory, who had gone for a walk 'by himself entirely,' sent a rifle-bullet. He wounded him, but no more. Rory frequently took lonely walks, though urged again and again not to do so. If the truth must be told, Rory was deeply in love—stupid boy, was he not?—and need I say that Ailie was always in his thoughts?

'And is it a poor Irish boy like me she'll be marrying,' he said aloud one day, 'when she can marry a baron himself? It's the baron she'll get, and it's Rory will die. Ochone!'

Well, the young fellow's prophecy may come true; only wild adventure, not love, is in our line at present. Rory on these lonely, love-stricken excursions, would always take his flute with him, and the airs he played were sweet but sad.

One day, while sitting by a rock playing thus, he heard a rattling sound in the grass, and looking up, beheld to his horror a huge and ugly serpent creeping closer and closer towards him, with his basilisk eyes fixed on Rory's face.

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'Sure, it isn't you I'm playin' to, you ugly big beast of the world!'

There was no fear about this young sailor. Down dropped his flute and up came his rifle. The snake glided slowly away.

'Faith,' cried Rory, 'it's the whole head of you I could have blown off, but it isn't myself that'll kill a craytur that loves the flute.'

. . . . . .

The camp and great marquee once prepared, our heroes for two—not long, but far too short—months lived what I cannot help calling a kind of ideal life. And everything was done with the regularity and precision one sees exercised on shipboard. There was the morning swim in the lake, then breakfast; after this, up and away to the woods and the wilds, and they seldom returned without edible game of some kind. They had built a mess-tent, and gaily decorated it with flowers day after day.

But they had also managed to build a boat, and Rory and Allan frequently went fishing therein. Just one day, though, Vasto, in leaping overboard, swamped the boat. It was after a duck Allan had shot for supper Vasto sprang. He swam in shore with it, and with little Tronso seated quietly on his shoulder.

An hour after our young heroes managed to land, taking turn and turn about sculling, for one oar was lost. Luncheon was always taken to the hunting-grounds by a guide. In the evening, yarns, songs, and supper. Then a quiet smoke for the elders, and after that the hammock. There were many bright-winged birds in the forest, and at first the boys

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thought of making a collection of skins. But Rory after a few minutes' cogitation said:

'Och! now, isn't it better, dear boy, to let the poor pretty things sing and enjoy their sweet selves in their own pretty way?'

'Well—yes. You're right, Rory. Right again.'

So the idea was abandoned.

Not only did all hands enjoy the grand outing, but the constant exercise, the sunshine, the fresh air and the balmy odour of the pines, made every one hard and brown and happy.

'Baron,' said Dr. Grant one morning, 'the physician who told you that your heart was bad is nothing better than a cuddy.'

The baron smiled a happy smile.

'I think,' he said, 'it will be for me no great difficulty to sail for the great snow-land next spring.'

'What! Siberia?' asked Uncle Jack.

'I did not say so. Yet have I been there in winter, and in summer too.'

'Is it after finding the North Pole you'll be?' asked Rory.

'Not quite, Brother Rory; but there are islands far to the south of this which have never yet been explored.

'When I returned,' he added, 'I should probably marry.'

Rory heaved the biggest sample of a sigh possible.

But, luckily for his sensitiveness, no one noticed it.

Just one or two further adventures among the Rockies I must mention ere this delightful camp is broken up, and our heroes return to civilization.

Uncle Jack, who was a splendidly built and tough

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old sailor, was fond of mountain exploration. 'There is nothing better than hill-climbing,' the surgeon had told the baron, 'for strengthening a weak heart.' So the baron was uncle's constant companion on these excursions.

One morning which appeared especially bright and fine, Ross announced his intention of going too. He was really second to no one in his love of mountaineering. And who does not love it, I wonder, who has ever tried it? The silence, the solitary grandeur of the mountains, and the splendid scenery, the woods and wilds that lie far beneath you like a panorama of some strange world, which seems not the one you left a few hours before, lead, methinks, to quiet contemplation, and brings one's thoughts nearer to heaven and to God.

The doctor to-day was to be camp-keeper, while Allan and Rory went after the wild duck, and Tronso at his master's bidding went with Vasto. Indeed, the cunning but clever little rascal rode most of the way on the Great Dane's shoulder, but Vasto felt not his weight, and seemed even pleased to have such a jockey.

The morning, however, which had promised so fair, broke treaty, and about twelve Allan and Rory came running into camp drenched to the skin, for the thunder was rattling, and the rain descended in torrents.

But worse was to follow, for, shortly after, one of those violent storms came on, so common in mountainous and forest lands. It was fierce and terrible while it lasted. It blew down tents, and almost ruined the camp. The strong marquee was lifted body bulk

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at last, and thrown on its rent and riven sides fully fifty yards away. The storm had come from the east, and at last drove away to the north. Its thunder and its lightning were no more heard, and the sun shining out once more, the doctor and his shipmates set about restoring order, the Mexicans affording efficient help.

Luckily the bronchos, who had stampeded, returned to camp very crestfallen indeed. The wonder is that they were not killed, for here and there in the forest whole acres of trees were laid low, uprooted, or smashed.

As the alpine portion of the campmen had not returned when the sun was setting behind a cloud-scape of the most brilliant beauty, great anxiety was felt on their behalf. Let us see how it fared with them.

The clouds banked up early in the forenoon, on the wild hills above the greenery of woods, but still they continued to ascend. Soon the rain began to pelt down most pitilessly, and they were glad to find themselves in the shelter of a cave. But, strange to say, there was no wind; no, never a breath.

The rain, after two or three hours, gave place, as it did below, to a clear sky, and so out all came and sat down to their luncheon, but unanimous in their decision to return to camp, after a spell of rest and a smoke.

They were just finished, and their guns unluckily were a little out of reach, when a monster grizzly rushed from the mouth of the cave, where she, too, had been taking shelter from

'The pelting of this pitiless storm.'

She dashed speedily past, with a coughing roar

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that was re-echoed from the hills around. The great dogs would have given chase immediately, and been instantly killed, had they not obeyed the summons of 'Down—charge!' There were no thoughts now of returning to camp. No, they must go after Bruin.

The tracks of a bear are not difficult to trace even without dogs, for solidly enough do bears plant their paws. So on they ran after Madame Bruin, following the baron, who proved himself an excellent tracker. He led Czarina. Ross led Vasto.

'But,' Tronso thought to himself, 'I'm a free nigger. I have no master here to obey, and as soon as I sight that bear I shall just show them all what an Irish terrier can do.'

It was a good hour and a half before there was a sign or sight of Bruin. She had led them straight east-by-north through the woods, and eventually across a grassy upland.

It was now that Tronso's time came, and off he went. He was soon at her heels. It was not so easy for the terrier to kill her as he imagined, but he snapped at her legs, and every time he did so she turned and tried to paw him.

He thus delayed the monster until the gunners got up, when she turned madly and wildly at bay. Not even the baron himself had ever heard such strange cries. Indeed, even when trying to kill dogs and men, her voice seemed pleading for mercy. She soon lay dead, however, and, oh! the pity of it, at that moment two pretty cubs came rushing from a huge hillock, and leaped joyfully on the poor murdered mother's back.

'I cannot stand that!' said Uncle Jack.

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And, sick at heart, he turned his back upon the scene. And, in mercy's name, Ross and the baron shot both cubs. They took not a skin nor an ear, but, just calling the dogs, turned their backs and walked away. The sturdy old sailor lifted a brown hand and brushed away a tear.

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They now found themselves lost in the deep, dark forest, gloaming and gloom all around, and with no one who could guide them to the distant camp. Too dangerous a journey even for the dogs.

'The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.'

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CHAPTER XVI

'HANDS UP, MEN!'

SUPPERLESS and cheerless, the three hunters huddled together with the dogs throughout that long dark night. Chilly it was, too, damp and creepy. Nor could they sleep much for the howling of wolves in the distance, to say nothing of mosquitoes. Glad enough were they when morning broke, and the sun shone once more cheerily down through rifts in the dark tree-tops.

At first they thought of retracing their tracks towards the cave in the mountain, from which they had started after the poor bear, but Czarina ran on westwards for a little distance, and barked back at them in quite a droll way; with every bark she shook her head funnily to one side.

'Follow me,' she was evidently saying, 'and by sight, if not by scent, I can take you home.'

'No need,' said Ranzikoff, 'to go round about. I can trust my snow-white angel with my life itself if necessary.'

Then the snow-white angel seemed delighted, and all hands followed her for many a weary mile. Tronso had disappeared during the night, however. 'This isn't good enough for me,' the doggie had said to himself. 'I'm off. They can follow who like.'

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And he was back at the camp and safe in his master's arms by midnight.

The doctor was up betimes, and when breakfast had been discussed it was determined to set out in search of their friends, taking Tronso as a guide. Tronso appeared to be much pleased, and quickly set off in the direction of the forest—the same way, no doubt, that he himself had come on the night before.

They were surprised when they noticed the awful destruction which the cyclone had caused here and there among the gigantic trees. It had struck them with lightning force, and scattered and smashed them as a melinite shell would have done.

Right well did Tronso know the duty that was required of him, so he trotted quietly on in front, sometimes smiling round at them, as dogs will. No wonder that dogs think themselves superior to *us* poor bipeds in many ways, creatures who can do nothing without machinery, and would starve if left to their own powers; creatures who cannot even run down a hare or steer themselves safely through a wood without the assistance of a dog!

They had not gone far, however, before their little guide uttered a joyous yap, and stood stock-still. Next moment Czarina herself leaped over him, and did not halt until she had brought up in the midst of the search-party. I need not say that the lost were now found, or that the rejoicing was universal.

'Hungry!' cried Uncle Jack; 'is that what you asked, Dr. Grant? Why, sir, I could eat an alligator.'

'We haven't an alligator ready, dear uncle,' said Allan, 'but the Mexies are cooking a beautiful curry and vegetable fixings to match.'

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'What have you had here, boys?' asked the baron. 'Such chaos and confusion I have never seen before!'

'Only the tail-end of a tornado, bedad!' answered Rory, with a sailor's indifference to storm. 'If we'd been at sea, why, never a thing would have been disturbed at all.'

Well, after a brief rest, all hands set to work to clear away the wreck, and before night, so well and cheerily did every one labour, the camp was almost *in statu quo.*

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The autumn was now advancing, and the days getting shorter. The heat was still oppressive, but the nights were cold enough.

One dark midnight they heard the voices of wolves rise howling on the breeze. They had already without doubt devoured the carcases of the bears, and had now come after the tame Rocky Mountain goat which was kept as a pet in camp; and probably those savage beasts, who stand in the same relation to, say, our Scottish collies as the savages in Africa's dark interior stand to man, would have made short work of Nanny.

'Perhaps,' said the baron, 'it is the bronchos they will also attack.'

So it was determined to give them a warm reception next night.

The dogs were kept on leash, therefore, ready to slip at a moment's notice, Tronso being tied up.

How beautifully clear was the moon as she sailed up over the eastern hills, soon flooding wood and forest, and making the glade where stood the camp as bright almost as day!

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Midnight past, the gaunt monsters approached in a row, the largest first; no less than six of them.

They were allowed to get within forty yards of the rough palisade, then a volley thundered out, and three fell dead where they stood. The rest, after a moment of confusion, turned to fly.

'Let loose the dogs!' cried uncle, and away went Vasto and the Borzoi, like arrows from a bow.

The yelling and awful snarling that now arose from the dark forest were terrible to listen to.

Then all was silence!

In half an hour the two dogs came back. They had each, no doubt, attacked one wolf and killed him; and the other had fled.

Heigho! our sports are really cruel after all; and I may tell you here of a strange discovery which our heroes made next day: the largest wolf killed—the chief, perhaps the father, of the pack—had disappeared.

'He hasn't been here at all,' said Uncle Jack.

'I know better, I think,' said the baron, and with Czarina he descended a little way into the forest.

The dog soon found a grave, which she unearthed, and there lay the chief; the wolf and another had no doubt returned, in the face of danger, to drag him off and bury him.

It was a proof, surely, that affection and love can live even in the heart of a mountain wolf.

The man replaced the earth, and even scattered the grave over with dead pine-needles, as it had been before. Then back to camp in silence, *thinking*.

During their stay of a few weeks longer they had many encounters with bears.

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But at last, as storms were getting more and more frequent, and they feared that streams which were but burns in spring might now be swollen into rivers, they concluded to strike camp and make tracks for the distant ranche where they had hired the ponies.

William the goat was set free, but he followed the hunters nevertheless.

It was not without a feeling of sadness that they left their wild quiet home, for they had enjoyed a summer of almost perfect health and happiness.

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Bill Shee was the ugliest of three cut-throat-looking loafers who sat drinking old rye, raw and hot, one night in the back room of a small detached house in San Francisco. The second was a lanky Yankee, who had fled from New York after committing crimes that might have 'lagged' him. The third an Englishman, much wanted in his own land, a young, dark-haired, short-necked villain, who well knew the meaning of the word 'swag.' He had come out here to make his pile, but hadn't made it yet.

Said Nat the Yankee, 'I can't see much cash in it, and broncho-lifting means—'

He drew his finger upwards from the left side of the neck in a way that was expressive enough. The others laughed aloud.

'Why, Nat,' said Chawles of the bull-neck, 'if *you'd* a-been lynched every time you lifted a horse you would have needed as many blooming lives as a cat!'

'But I tell you, Nat,' cried Bill, 'that there is money in it! I know three more that will join us. We'll have the bronchos, and we'll have the swag, for Baron

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Rinkie, or whatever his stupid name is, doesn't travel without the shiners. Bet your bottom dollar on that, Nat.'

'And,' put in Chawles, 'if they happens to fall against our bowies and gets cut, that's their own look-out—eh?'

'To be sure.'

A slatternly-looking woman came in with more drink, and after that the three cut-throats threw themselves anyhow on a huge bed that stood in the corner. Daylight was glaring in through the dusty windows, and causing the gas that had been left burning in the cheerless room to look dim and yellow and very much out of place. But the fellows got up and shook themselves, as wolves might do. That was their toilet.

Then they solemnly joined hands and swore to 'hang together until death should part them.' After breakfast they scattered, but met next evening with two more villains added to their number, who were apparently as dangerous as themselves, and just as bad-looking. They spent the evening in the same way, only Bill drank nothing; his mind was on business.

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One evening, just as darkness began to fall, our heroes reached the top of a divide only ten miles from the Dutchman's ranche. They were tired and footsore, but, after resting awhile, determined to push on under the light of yon bright half-moon, and get to Heidremann's farm before morning. Supper was soon cooked, and thoroughly enjoyed, for every one was happy and gay.

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They were just thinking of starting, when suddenly Vasto sprang up with a low growl, and with hair on end from crown to tail-tip.

'Call back your dogs. I'm a friend!'

These were the words that came down the wind, and next moment Heidremann's son stood before them. He was perspiring and out of breath.

'Be ready for attack!' he cried; 'the ripping gang have sworn to come, and if they do, you'll be held up and robbed for certain.

'But I've good news,' he added, smiling. 'The woman who keeps their club has told me all, and mounted police are already on their track. Besides, boys, my father will be in readiness for them just above the divide.'

'And aren't *we* to fight, lad?' said Uncle Jack.

'No! on no account. I'm giving you my father's distinct orders.'

'Quick! Withdraw to that wood immediately; there is not a minute to lose. But heap wood on the fire. It will guide them towards the camp.'

'The advice is good,' said Ross, 'let us take it.' So after replenishing the fire till its flames shot high and its smoke dimmed the light of the beautiful moon, they retired into the darkness of the adjoining forest, taking the dogs, and even William the goat, with them.

A whole hour went slowly past. It was a weary, weary wait. But at long last the trample of horses' feet was heard afar, becoming every minute more distinct, and very shortly they could see five men surround the camp fire.

'Curse them; they have fled!' cried one.

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Vasto growled, and Czarina gave vent to a half-smothered bark.

'Hurrah!' shouted the English cut-throat. 'They are hiding yonder. Now then, death or victory! Hurrah! boys, hurrah!'

'Fire!' cried Uncle Jack; and a volley was poured into the advancing squad. One horse was killed, another's saddle was emptied, but on came the rest with awful imprecations and cries for vengeance.

The danger was now extreme, but our friends stood to their guns, determined to sell their lives dearly. The robbers had hardly reached within twenty yards of the forest before, to their dismay, a posse of mounted police met them.

'Hands up, men!' cried the officer. 'I know you all. Your little game's over.'

A volley from revolvers was all the answer they vouchsafed, and one policeman fell, to rise no more. Off now into the semi-darkness dashed the cut-throats, but Chawles' horse was shot, and he himself speedily made prisoner. The rest were seen no more, and it was vain to follow through the wild country. Then up came Heidremann's burly fellows to the number of ten, if not more.

'Only *two* prisoners!' said the bold ranchman. 'Well, it is better than none.'

'Thank God, my friends are well!' he added.

There was shaking of hands all round now, and the heartiest of Dutch greetings. The two prisoners, Chawles and Nat, were made fast to a tree, and Vasto with Czarina was placed on guard.

No one would think of going on now till morning. There was plenty to eat and drink; and having

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satisfied the cravings of nature, nearly all hands went to sleep, after stretching out and placing a handkerchief over the face of the murdered policeman. I do not know what the law may be now, or what the punishment for crimes like these. But on this occasion Heidremann's men formed a court, opened it, and proceeded to discuss the situation. The two prisoners well knew what the sentence would be:

Death by lynching!

'Of course,' said the chief of police, 'we must report the case, but you are too strong for us to resist.'

'And you wouldn't, if we weren't,' said Heidremann, laughing.

'Prepare for your doom,' he continued, facing the prisoners. 'We give you five minutes.'

Chawles was insolent and daring to the last. Nat was trembling and pale. Then came the dreadful *dénouement.* As the two men stood for a few moments beneath the dangling nooses, Chawles shook hands heartily with his pal, and carelessly remarked, 'We swore to hang together till death, Nat, and we're going to do it. Hoist away, my merry men. Good-bye all!'

An hour after this, the police and the others parted. They took with them the dead policeman. A court was held, and the verdict was somewhat as follows: 'Served the rascals right, but Heidremann's men must come up for sentence when called upon.'

Well, they have not been called upon yet, and the strange adventures I am describing took place many years ago.

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For three weeks longer our heroes stayed on the ranche, enjoying a quiet though rough and rustic life. They had, moreover, a good deal of shooting, but nothing in the shape of a wild adventure. Stay, though; I must qualify that statement somewhat, for both Allan and Rory learned to ride buck-jumping bronchos. I do not consider this by any means a fine art, but it is certainly a difficult one.

However, Allan and Rory had a full share of pluck. They were like little Tronso, and when they caught hold of anything, if it were merely an idea, it was hard indeed to shake them off it. But they had to part with good Heidremann at last, and sorry indeed did he seem to let them go. Nor would he do so until they had promised that if ever any single one of them should come again within five hundred miles of the ranche he would call, and he (Heidremann) would ensure his having a real good time of it.

They left now, not to return to England, however. Winter was coming on apace; so after visiting every great American city, including Chicago, St. Louis, Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, they found themselves, one terribly cold and frosty day, back once more in dear old New York. It is dear to me, reader, at all events; and I hope ere long to revisit the splendid city, for indeed no one should think of settling down until he has seen America, with all its ever-increasing wonders, at least more than once.

They stayed here with old friends for quite a long time, then went farther north into Canada. The truth is that Baron Ranzikoff wanted to harden off

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before starting on his great voyage to the ice-fields and the islands that lay towards the Pole.

After touring in Canada, and visiting its great cities and forests, they returned through New York, and took passage at once in a small steamer bound for Glasgow. They were almost the only passengers, and the voyage would be a long one.

Why, it may be asked, did they not choose a German-Lloyd or some Liverpool ocean greyhound? For a very simple reason, or say rather two reasons—the first being that a long and roughish passage would assist the hardening-off process; and secondly, because the dogs would have unlimited liberty and exercise.

So spring was but a few days on ahead when they reached the splendid city of Glasgow. February, be it remembered, is called the first month of spring in Scotland, and rightly too, for it is then that bud and burgeon begin to clothe the trees and hedgerows, and wild flowers open their wondering eyes, and try by their beauty and perfume to lure the early butterfly and the honey-bee.

The baron took up his abode at a beautiful villa which he hired for the purpose. He was a modest man—a man who loved not large hotels, and did not feel at home among strangers.

One evening the baron arrived from a visit to the docks, where he had been all day long, with his beautiful Borzoi. There was a pleasant sparkle in his eye, and every one knew, as if by instinct, that he had something nice to communicate. But the baron said nothing until he and his friends had retired to the comfortably furnished drawing-room.

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The great French windows were opened wide, and choice cigars were lit. The baron was like all the rest, very abstemious, but to-night he had a little wine.

'Well, boys,' he said, as he threw himself back in his rocking-chair, 'I have bought her, and she is a beauty fore and aft.'

'A ship?' said Uncle Jack.

'Another dog?' said Ross McLean.

'A splendid yacht, gentlemen; she is large, she is superb, and will therefore assist in removing some of the oppression of riches from my heart.

'And now I am going to call for volunteers to join me in a cruise into the far north Arctic Ocean.'

'Oh!' cried Uncle Jack, 'I shall take command if you choose.'

'Good! A show of hands for other volunteers.'

Every hand was held up.

'Glorious!' cried the Russian. 'Well, now, I have a captain, and a mate—you, young Allan; a supercargo in my friend Rory; a minister, Ross McLean; and a brave surgeon, Dr. Grant.

'Why,' he added, 'I must have been born under a lucky star.

'And now, boys all—for I dearly love that expression—we shall close the windows, gather in a semicircle around the fire, and build our castles in the air.'

It was late that evening before they thought of retiring. But who can blame them?

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CHAPTER XVII

WHERE DAYLIGHT NEVER SHUTS HIS EYE

THE baron was right loyal and patriotic, and he resolved to have his new yacht named the Czarina. As our heroes now found that everything was well at Castle Indolence, no one thought of going south until the end of March; and by this time the Czarina was fortified, painted, furnished, and provisioned, and, indeed, almost ready for sea.

Then Ranzikoff begged that uncle might telegraph for Mrs. Adair and her beautiful daughter, for Aileen only, he said, should name and launch the yacht. This happened after a short run which the baron made to his own country. A hurried journey it undoubtedly was, one brief month in all. Yet in that time he had made a surprise visit to the halls of his ancestors and his estates. His reception was that of a prince, and to his great delight he found that his agents and all his people had been doing their duty well during his long absence. He distributed gifts to every one, and bade them good-bye, followed by the blessings of many old people who had known and served his parents.

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Next he visited the Emperor and Czarina, taking even the Empress's namesake with him—the lovely Borzoi. He had stayed three whole days here, then hurried back to Scotland; and the boys, who had missed him and his quiet, good-natured ways, now gave him a right hearty welcome.

Mrs. Adair and Ailie arrived a few days after, and 'surely,' thought Rory, 'my beautiful queen is more lovely than ever.'

'Och! Rory, you rogue,' he added, addressing himself half aloud, 'it's only as a queen you must love her.'

He twirled his young moustache, and glanced for a moment at the looking-glass. 'But, Rory,' he said, 'it is good-looking you are, to be sure, and you may love Ailie, but mind, only as a subject loves his sovereign.'

The ceremony of launching the strong yet beautiful yacht was witnessed by thousands, and that evening our heroes, and heroines too, dined with a company of learned savants. In a speech, one told the baron that did he not make minute scientific observations he would not be doing his duty to the world. The baron was rather bored, as were the others, but he was too good-mannered to show it.

And now the time was short. They must sail in ten days, yet Ranzikoff stole many opportunities of taking Ailie and her mother down the Clyde, and up into the Highlands, and indeed, 'everywhere,' as Rory said. They went all together, though, to the Tayside Highlands. The trees were now all in young leaf, the fields, the banks, and even the rocks ablaze with beautiful flowers.

'Heigho!' sighed Allan, as he sat with Rory and

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Ailie on the very spot where the Irish lad had fished him up out of the water, 'I would I were a boy again.'

'Oh, dear Rory O'Flinn,' said Ailie, with sadness in her bonnie blue eyes, 'I can never forget that you saved my brother's life; and I'll pray for you both, when you are far away on the lonely sea of ice, and God is sure to bring you safely back and home to us.'

Some time after this, when Allan was up stream making a cast for a salmon, Rory found himself alone with Ailie.

'Ailie,' he said, 'I hope ye burned the poor scrawly verses I sent you when I was a brat of a boy.'

'No, oh no, I shall always keep them!'

'Maybe there was divil a word of truth in them though.'

Ailie clapped her little hand on his lips. 'You mustn't use sailor language,' she said, and he hung his head.

'Do you know, Ailie, that the baron loves you very much—ahem! no, no,' he added quickly, for Ailie blushed a little; 'I mean, loves his Queen, the Empress. And isn't it right entirely?'

'Very much so. It is good to love one's Queen.'

Rory was delighted, and waxed poetic.

'One day, Ailie, you will be married to some great man. But I've built you a bit of a throne on my heart, and I shall love you always, always—as my queen. Nothing more, and 'tis right to love your queen.'

Then the lad pressed her hand just once to his lips, as respectfully, as gently, as though she had been the Empress of India. The bashful boy—he

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was little else—started up now, and advanced to meet the baron. He would have gone right away, but Ailie motioned him to a seat by her side.

This visit to old haunts was very delightful, and so, too, was that made by Allan with his sister and mother to Castle Indolence.

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When the sturdy yet pretty yacht steamed slowly down the Clyde and out to sea, the weather was delightful. They rounded the Mull, then steered almost directly north.

The crew was considerably larger than was needed; but good sailors they all were, and most of them had been to the ice before. Once fairly at sea, fires were banked, and all sail that a fore-and-aft schooner could carry was set.

Then, the breeze increasing, the fires were let out, and for days and days the engineers and stokers had very good times of it. They had their own little mess, as cosy as cosy could be, and now they dressed in their Sabbath clothes, with scarf-pins and rings, and lounged about 'midships, looking the very picture of contentment.

Rory and Allan used to visit them now and then in their curtained cabin, which could even boast of a fireplace. And Rory would play to them; and Mr. Cullen and his junior, Ritchie, told these young mariners many a wild and weird tale concerning their own experiences in the icy north.

The wind lasted for a week, and by this time the Czarina was about opposite Iceland, though much farther to the east. All had gone well till now, but one evening—there still was a long, dark night—

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down went the breeze, and so suddenly too, that Uncle Jack, the skipper, was quite justified in believing that it would rise again in another quarter, and come on to blow.

'Light the fires, and get up steam with all speed.'

That was the order that Rory now took to the sturdy engineers.

'It's your watch, Ritchie,' said Cullen, 'but I'll come and help you.'

Off went their 'Sunday braws,' and on went their somewhat greasy working garments once more. Vasto was snugly asleep on a piece of canvas, with little Tronso under his chin. Baron Ranzikoff himself was walking the quarter-deck with his noble dog.

'See, captain,' he said to Uncle Jack, 'my beautiful companion sniffs the air. She ever does so before a coming storm.'

'I'm not sorry,' was the reply; 'and I'm not afraid. I just want to find out if the yacht knows how to behave herself.'

The sun went down behind a very strange cloudscape and seascape. The waves were beginning to ripple to a northern breeze, and stretching far along the horizon was a bank of dark-blue clouds, that any one might have taken for a mountainous shore; above this was layer after layer of pink-red clouds, with rifts of greenish sky between. Twilight lingered long, but the steam began to roar through the pipe, joining the smoke that went rolling away overhead and astern.

All sail was taken in now, the wind, which first came in little puffs, increasing every minute. The puffs became squalls, the squalls joined to form a

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strong headwind. And this wind soon reached the strength of a whole gale.

The dogs had a large and cleanly-kept cabin all to themselves; and every stormy day or stormy night they made tracks for this, getting hurriedly below. Two would stand by the cabin door, while one went and brought the steward, a kind-hearted man, who immediately let them in, gave them a biscuit each, and carefully closed the door.

At midnight this storm was at its height. And a fearful gale it was! Her head was kept to the north, however. She was facing it; but so terrible was the wind's force that she made but little headway, while tons of foaming water, aye, and green cold seas as well, were shipped over the bows and came rolling aft. But everything was secure, and the Czarina was battened down fore and aft. The captain never left the deck, but more than once did he send Allan below to ascertain if the engines were working well.

Allan had to dodge the seas and watch the motion most carefully, as he went forward amidships. More than once he found himself in the scuppers. But he was dressed in oilskins from head to heels.

Down below, when he got there, he found quite a change of climate—roaring, blazing fires, light and heat, and Cullen standing, but swaying about, by the engine-room door, with nothing on him save his shirt and trousers, mopping the sweat from his broad Scotch brow with a piece of yarn or tow. The answer to the captain's query was only one word: 'Sweetly!'

Towards eight bells, in the middle watch, when

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Rory, who had been made second mate, as no supercargo was required, came up to relieve Allan, the storm was at its height, and the wind roaring in explosive gusts like the bursting of melinite shells. The sea was one seething mass of foam.

Alas! while Allan was standing beside his friend, both holding on to the ratlines, and shouting some orders into his ears, something dark and bulky swept past them. It was a poor sailor. He was dashed against the grating aft, near to the wheel, and it was believed he was floated overboard.

But when daylight came glimmering in at last, and the sun rose over the awful turmoil, the poor fellow's mangled body was found firmly wedged in beneath the grating, and he was buried that same hour.

His sad death caused but little sorrow in the ship, for hardly yet had the men become well enough acquainted to love each other. But the man had left a wife behind him, aye, and bairnies too, who would sadly miss the father.

The storm went down—at least the wind did, for the sea still chopped and foamed and tumbled, its green waves singing in the frosty air, as they went rushing astern. How sweet the sleep a sailor gets after a night like this!

When he had discussed a very early breakfast, the skipper turned in and slept heavily, a dreamless sleep, until the early dinner-hour. The Czarina was almost a temperance ship. Nothing does one any good in these wild cold seas save coffee. That is my own experience. Only the men were allowed an evening glass, and sometimes the older people in the saloon had the same.

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One or two lesser gales, and then they made the ice. The crow's nest was erected on the mainmast, as high as the gilded truck, on the very day that Allan, swinging high aloft, caught the first glimpse of the ice-blink, a long white glare far away on the northern horizon.

Small pieces of ice, no longer than sheep, lay athwart their course, and the good ship went rattling through them; they stopped her way but little. Streams of slush or half-melted snow were worse. But little bergs became big bergs, and ere long swarms of seagulls, terns, and snow-birds from the main pack itself were flying tack and half-tack around the ship, and screaming our mariners a welcome.

They now steamed a more easterly course. Fires were once more banked, for the sea was as smooth as an inland lake on the sweetest summer's day. And everything went smoothly on board, too.

Cold? Well, I do not say that the temperature was not low enough, but in sunny weather like this no one felt it, and no one meant to feel it. Exercise, even walking the decks, was in itself a pleasure. Then the men were encouraged to play all kinds of blood-warming games. As for the dogs, they had glorious fun indeed, scurrying and feathering around the decks after the big wooden balls, thrown or rolled by the men for their especial delectation.

It was a kind of canine football, Rugby rules, and when Czarina and Vasto were having a scrimmage over the ball, Tronso would watch his chance, paw it out from under them, and quickly foot it all the way forward to goal, the men cheering and clapping their hands.

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Well, all hands fore and aft had appetites like ostriches, only they did not bolt scupper nails, and if they felt a trifle cold when the 'barber' lay low on the water, why there was hot coffee below to be had for the asking.

The men looked like bears in their rough jackets, and ears and hands were kept covered, for summer was only just beginning. By-and-by they could dispense with such clothing even in Spitzbergen, the marvellous island they had come to visit, and in some measure to explore.

Vasto was full of fun and tricks. Czarina had always a piece of canvas to lie upon on the weather side of the quarter-deck, and tricky old Vasto (N.B. 'old' at sea is a term of endearment)—Vasto, I say, with the richest of fun twinkling from those drab eyes of his, would watch his opportunity, steal this canvas, and go tearing round and round the decks with it.

If Czarina saw him, she went for him in quite a womanly way—with tooth and nail—and very soon put an end to his fun, recovered the stolen property, and came triumphantly back to the quarter-deck.

Of course Vasto was big enough to have devoured Czarina, but he was a sailor, and, therefore, gentleman, and too gallant by far to defend himself against a lady.

But retribution itself came one day, and poor Vasto tripping over the piece of canvas, fell with great force, and badly injured his near fore-paw. He went howling most pitifully aft to seek for assistance, and Dr. Grant, happening to come up at this moment, quickly examined the foot, and dressed it tenderly. The dog licked his face in gratitude. He had to

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wear a bandage and splint for a week. Then he tore these off, and Czarina and himself applied hot fomentations with their tongues.

Vasto got well, but never again did he attempt to steal Czarina's canvas.

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They reached the heavy ice on the southern shores of Spitzbergen about the end of May, and, therefore, rather early for much, if any exploration. That did not signify anything to our heroes: summer, with its *one* long day, was all before them. So they determined to cruise about until circumstances became more favourable, and make themselves acquainted with the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, and the creatures that bask upon the ice or sleep and swim on the sea's deep blue.

The mainland of Spitzbergen is a huge tract of desolate country, nearly always icebound, and with mighty glaciers everlastingly, though slowly, moving seawards. There are ranges of mountains in it, and vast tablelands of inland snows, many portions of which are so roughened with boulders of ice that they are impassable whether to men on snow-shoes or dragging light sleighs. The *skis* (pronounced 'shees') are the long Norwegian or Lapland snow-shoes. They are saddled, as it were, to the feet, and, after you have got well up to them and do not tumble about, progress is most swift and charming.

This mainland lies like an immense irregular triangle, with its well-pointed apex to the south, between the latitudes of about 76½° to 80°, and in longitude at its extreme breadth from 11° to 22° east of meridian. But there is a Nor'-East Island of great

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extent, and almost egg-shaped, besides many smaller mountainous islands that I need not mention.

The flocks of sea-birds that tacked around the Czarina, or floated on the calm rolling waters near her, were immense. It was the breeding season certainly, but I happen to know that not one-fifth of our sea-birds mate year after year.

Away inland on the islands, in bare spots, interspersed with patches of timid yet beautiful Arctic flowers, or on ledges of rocks, warmed and dried by Arctic sunlight, you still find beautifully pointed eggs, green or blue, and speckled and streaked, as if by a quill-pen dipped in ink, and indeed eggs of every shape and size.

On the ground it is scarcely possible to wade through these 'gulleries,' and the noise is deafening. But more than this, you need strong leggings, for many of the larger birds, instead of flying off, refuse to budge, and will peck most viciously at your lower extremities.

'What are you doing here?' they seem to scream, 'you featherless old biped? Get away, get away, get a—way—ay—ay! You're ugly enough to addle my eggs.'

'Look! look!' cried Rory excitedly one day, pointing to a huge hairy head, with monster paddling paws in front, that appeared above the water. 'Allan! Allan! the monster is coming this way. Bedad! it is going to board the ship entirely.'

And board he did.

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CHAPTER XVIII

DENIZENS OF THE ARCTIC DEEP

I HAVE a *marked* respect for the great white, or rather pale yellow, bear of the north.

(N.B.—The *mark* is quite visible when I am bathing.)

No one who has never seen a Polar bear other than those dwarfs in the Zoo can have any idea of the vast strength and ferocity of this animal. An ice bear (they have been found nearly 2,000 pounds in weight) could crunch the bones and tear the inside out of the biggest lion on earth.

Suppose a huge lion and a yellow bear to meet, the brave lion might crouch and spring, and both would be on their hind legs in a moment. The lion would try to do the 'yaffling,' the bear would do the squeezing. The lion would try to fix the bear by the massive hair-clad throat, but Bruin, standing now on one hind leg, would with the other claw the lion open. Down the two would drop; the lion's jaws would relax, and Bruin would leave him dead.

But concerning the beast that boarded the Czarina. The ship had a rather low freeboard; the bear was almost exhausted from a swim of perhaps one hundred miles, or even double the distance. He was hungry, angry, and tired.

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For a time nothing more was seen of him, and if he merely intended to rest by hanging on astern for a time, as little village boys do when they see a carriage where there would be no 'whip behind,' he would be allowed to proceed on his voyage and make his record. But Bruin in about ten minutes' time smelt roast pork. A bear will come a long distance over an ice-pack if a ham-bone is put in the fire to allure him. And now this prodigious wild beast cast off from the stern, and, swimming boldly round, boarded at 'midships.

The men courageously ran below and closed the hatch. Bruin had come on board to dine, and no one wished to make part of the banquet. Allan and Rory were on the quarter-deck, and knelt rifle in hand to receive the charge. The beast's roar was a terrible one, a hoarse, choking, cough-like yell.

Brave lads! Their hands were not unsteadied by the dreadful sound, and next moment, shot through neck and shoulder, Bruin fell on deck in the agonies of death. His struggles and convulsions were fearful for a short time. He finally lifted his head just once. His eyes were glazed, and almost immediately after the great head fell with a heavy thump, while the blood poured through the lee-scupper holes literally in bucketfuls.

Up rushed the great dogs, but both were frightened, and stood aloof. Not so Tronso. He dashed forward and shook one monster paw, or rather toe, most viciously, then, marching forward, he jumped on his master to lick his hand.

'Aren't you grateful?' he seemed to say. '*I* didn't

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take long, did I? It only wants just a little strength and courage to slay a beast like that.'

Allan laughed and patted him. The men skinned the bear, leaving the skull bones well cleaned inside, and after salting it, laid it aside with, of course, the paws and skull. That skin, at the present moment, adorns the drawing-room of Castle Indolence.

The great *kreng* or carcase of the unhappy beast was now hauled to an opened gangway, and allowed to slip overboard, while at the same time shovelfuls of fatty parings were thrown into the sea. The latter, floating astern, attracted the attention of hundreds of gulls, and down they came with screams of delight to gorge themselves, just as schoolboys do when Christmas plum-pudding adorns the festive board. Those floating, scrambling birds made a fine show, but this was nothing to be compared to the scene that was being enacted on the leeside.

A whole shoal of those fierce, vindictive monsters —Greenland sharks—some of which seemed nearly twenty feet in length, had captured the *kreng* of the *Ursus maritimus*, and were lashing their great tails and fighting with each other as they tore the body into fragments.

The Greenland shark is probably the largest, as it is the most vicious, shark that swims in the sea. It is called the *Scymnus borealis* by naturalists, and it is no exaggeration to say that in sealing-time in the Arctic they meet in shoals of thousands.

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Now a glance at any map of the world will acquaint the reader with both the shape and size of the Spitzbergen Islands, so I may save my ink. But he will

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notice also that the chief island is very much indented by gulfs and bays, as is the west coast of Scotland, from exposure to the tidal waves of the broad Atlantic Ocean. These indentations may have been partially caused by the eating away of the shores in the descent of vast glaciers, but the sea is the chief factor.

And now just a word concerning the internal economy of the Czarina herself. She was, of course, strong enough to bore through any ordinary ice, and also to stand the pressure of bergs or of the pack itself. So unless something unlooked for and unlikely occurred, such as the explosion of a boiler, or fire, our heroes were pretty safe.

Honest Vasto had been the doctor's first patient, and it was hoped he would be almost the last. But this simple sailor-surgeon, who used to call his office a mere sinecure, and style himself the idle man of the ship, was indeed one of the busiest. He could reef, steer, and box the compass. He could box in another sense of the word, too.

The wardroom or saloon had state-rooms opening off it. Its walls were beautifully and artistically painted in white and gold; there were mirrors everywhere, a most beautiful stove, and a table which was collapsible, and only taken out of the store-room aft when needed. So that in its absence the saloon was as pretty a drawing-room as any one could desire to see afloat or ashore.

No want of charming lounges and rocking-chairs here; and many a cosy evening, when their watch was not on deck, did our friends spend before the blazing sea-coal fire. Each dog had a mat, but only Tronso used to sit blinking at the fire, and dreaming,

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no doubt, his own droll little dreams, when at last he fell asleep. Rory's flute, to which the others sang, helped to while away the time, and prevent any one from feeling weary.

The state-room beds were cosy bunks, into which the officers had to wriggle each night—I have seen casks with bung-holes nearly as large as the entrance to these. But when they were well covered up they were warm enough indeed, albeit the little coffins in which they slept and the woollen counterpanes might be half an inch deep in hoar-frost (their frozen breath) when they turned out to keep their watch. Ah! but there was youth on the side of our younger heroes, and manhood hard and bold on that of Ross McLean and Uncle Jack.

The cookery was plain. The joints fresh, because they had been hung in the maintop earlier in the season, and were frozen as hard as oak. Indeed, it would take far less time to saw through a huge branch of a sturdy beech-tree than it did to saw off a piece of roast for dinner.

The steward was himself an excellent cook, and many a visit of duty did he pay forward while the meat was being done. Plum-pudding was an every-day dish, and nothing suits the Arctic climate better. It was the baron himself who showed the steward how to roast, when to grind, and in what manner to make the coffee. And nothing could have been more fragrant or soothing.

Well, as stated in last chapter, the good yacht Czarina went sailing to the southward, then held a course to the ENE. after rounding the Cape. Our boys saw much to marvel at here. It would

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take me many a long chapter to describe the ways and lives of the different species of whales, and I am not going to do it. Most of my natural history has been learned by experience.

Well, I have known master mariners go to Spitzbergen expecting to come back with a heavy creel, but return 'clean-ship.' I *think* they went at the wrong season, or did not know where to find the mighty leviathans. Besides, men accustomed only to the low-lying pack-ice in other seas are terrified at the gigantic bergs all around them here.

Our heroes, however, saw many of these sea monsters that whalers call 'fish.' Why, a whale is no more a fish than John Scott's brindled cow is. It is a mammal pure and simple. You would hardly call it simple, however, if it lifted your boat into the air, with all hands, so high that you might practise flying in your descent. But the whale suckles its young, and I have seen men tramping on the udders of a stranded whale and taking the milk to sup. A female whale is most dangerous when she is suckling. She will die for that droll-looking, lumpy-headed calf of hers, and in order to escape will dive and remain swimming below till almost drowned.

I could spin you endless yarns—all true—about these wonderful animals, if you were only in my wigwam here on a winter's evening. Have you ever heard of the killer-whale, for instance?

It is sometimes found, or slain, of a total length of thirty feet or more. It is a perfect demon of the deep, as far as seals are concerned. Its mouth is a huge and awful cavity, armed with tremendous teeth; and if it suddenly appears among a south-going

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drove of seals they fly in terror in every direction, but do not escape until perhaps a hundred or more are slain, and acres of the ocean reddened with blood.

But the narwhals, many of which our people saw when out boating, are very curious and formidable animals. They are from ten to twelve feet long, and coloured not unlike a mackerel, only much darker. The beast is called the sea-unicorn, owing to the fact that his tusks are enlarged, and protrude, one small, the other probably three feet long—a fearful, twisted, straight ivory spear.

See them plunging about on a fine day, coming up slowly head first, diving down again in the same way, and you would think butter wouldn't melt in their mouths.

But see a bull coming rushing towards your boat angry and fuming, dashing through the water with double the speed of a torpedo boat, and if you are not well armed you'll be sick and sorry you came.

By the way, I do not remember ever seeing more than one at a time—quite enough, if he is on an errand of investigation and means to sample one's boat. But if you stand firm, aim well, and let him know that you carry a sting, then, although you may not kill the beast, he remembers that he has an appointment, and that it is ungallant to keep a lady waiting, so he ports his helm and goes round on another tack.

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The four or five kinds of seals these explorers saw were the ordinary seal of commerce, or common seal; the harp seal, or saddle-back, a most beautiful creature, that I have kept as a pet; the crested seal, or bladder-nose; the great bear seal (only a few); and a cheeky

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little mite of a thing, whose English name I forget, and which comes to Greenland, out of curiosity, I do believe, for I have never known it breed; and the huge walrus.

Our heroes saw great droves or banks of these resting on low flat ice, to carry out probably some breeding arrangements. Now it is a mistake to think that some seals are not dangerous to tackle, for many are. Some Greenland harpooners would face a bear sooner than a bladder-nose. When he is lying half-asleep all by himself on a piece of snow-clad ice, with perhaps a few ordinary seals as satellites around him, they—poor, timid, persecuted creatures—will fly, but he, monarch of all he surveys, will blow up his crest till it looks like an old-fashioned kettle-pot upside down, and bid you come on, if there be any manhood in you.

Allan and Rory had a curious adventure, which taught them just what this immense creature can do. Rowed in a dinghy by two boys, they went after one of these. He looked up fiercely, defiantly, and he *blew* up too. Both fired, and his head fell. No, not dead—this was only a dodge on the part of Mr. Bladder-nose; but Rory was greatly excited, so much so that he forgot his English.

'Hurrah!' he cried, 'he's dead, and it's meself will catch him alive. Put me alongside the oice, me lads, and see me drag him to the boat.'

He sprang on to the little berg like a deer, and touched the monster lightly with his foot. 'Is it dead entoirely you are?' he cried. The monster quickly answered the question in a way that was not expected. He gave a roar like a Highland bull.

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'Faix!' cried Rory, 'it is too far that I've gone.'

He had no weapon, so made his feet his best friends. But that seal was too quick for him. In a moment he had seized Rory in the most free and easy part of his dress, and was tossing him gaily from side to side over the blue-black sea.

'Let a go, let a go, you ugly great baste! Shoot him, Allan! I shan't have a tooth in my head.'

Allan was afraid to shoot. But the boys sprang on shore with boathooks. Then Rory was tossed into the water as if he had been an empty bottle; the seal jumped in next, and dived.

Rory was easily fished out, but when they got him on board his teeth were chattering, and his face was cold and white. Dry clothes, however, and a glass of hot coffee soon put him to rights, but it was a long time before his messmates ceased chaffing him about his wild adventure.

. . . . . .

The walrus is at certain seasons most dangerous. A school of them will fight a whole boat's crew on the ice, or attack boats and capsize them with their awful tusks, though I never heard of walruses actually killing a man in the water.

Of course you must not believe all you hear from old Arctic sailors about walruses, or any other inhabitant of the dark blue Greenland Ocean, nor all you read in books, though, indeed, I myself would rather believe the sailor than the book.

When caravan travelling this summer, I met a man in a pretty fishing village in Scotland who could spin yarns about his Arctic experiences against any old tar I ever met.

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I mingle, in order to gain information, with all kinds and conditions of society when touring. Well, I was told that this mariner was a wonderful man, and had been to all ends of the earth. I found it so. Munchausen was nothing to him.

I permitted him to splice the mainbrace at my expense, not telling him, however, that I was myself a sailor and traveller. But the beauty of it was that when I rose to go, and was saying good-bye, he bade me be of good cheer, and told me that *even I* might see the world yet.

'Gweed bliss ye,' he said, to close up with; 'but, man, *I'm never tired tellin' the truth!*'

I agreed with him there, and was glad to get outside to laugh.

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CHAPTER XIX

BEARS AND SHARKS

AFTER seeing many strange things and wonders among the loose ice, the Czarina bore up at last for the west land of Spitzbergen; and it is my very earnest desire to tell you briefly all I can about this isle of desolation, as I have heard it called.

Desolation certainly does not reign here in summer time. Indeed, all around it is a world of bird and beast life too, and a visit to the internal portions of the island would well reward any one who should attempt it.

More than this, however, for Spitzbergen long ages ago must have been a vast land of forest and heaths. The wonderful woolly elephant, specimens of which are still being found almost whole on the northern shores of Europe, must once have been a wanderer in the wilds of Spitzbergen, and his strangely hooked tusks indicate that he fed on the foliage, &c. of trees, which he was able to reach and haul down.

Many extinct species of bears and wolves may also have lived here, to say nothing of gigantic birds, the fossils of which may one day be found by enterprising geologists.

Give me but time, and with my pen and a vivid

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imagination based on science and facts, I could rejuvenate this island for you, and place it before the mind's eye in all its pristine beauty and grandeur.

As it is, I have little doubt that it contains many precious ores. That coal, too, exists there goes without saying; but what say you to Spitzbergen as a goldfield? If gold or silver here exists, remember there is nothing impossible to human energy and intellect. Well, our heroes were not the first visitors or explorers, and they certainly will not be the last.

. . . . . .

I have been lying back for a few minutes in my chair with my face ceilingwards, and trying to remember how many different species of birds are to be found here. Let me give you some slight idea, before we tackle the ice itself, penetrate into the gulfs and bays, and make our way into the wild interior.

I may premise that I have met with many of my Arctic friends not only as far south as Faroe, but even around the Shetland Islands; and many that are common enough in England, and even nest in Norfolk, are to be found flying in immense flocks around the green-sided bergs and snow-covered floes of the far, far north.

Well, here, where in summer-time 'daylight never shuts its eye,' you find the nests or holes of such birds as the following: the beautiful snow-bird, silver or Arctic gull, the tiny, wee snow-bunting or snow-flea, several species of guillemots, little auks, skuas, fulmars, glaucous gulls, kittiwakes, black-headed gulls, malleys, pilot-birds, penguins, terns, and—I don't know what all besides. To seize the eggs of our British birds—to rob their nests, in other words—is not only cruel,

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but it is penal. In this marvellous bird-land, Spitzbergen, it is of course different. Nevertheless, Uncle Jack, although he had no desire to prevent his mates, Allan and Rory, from making a collection, made them promise to take but one egg from each nest.

They found the latter in many strange places, and as there were no wild animals to be feared—for Arctic foxes never attack any one—they seldom took arms with them, except revolvers, going on birdnesting expeditions.

They travelled a great deal on skis. This travelling is a kind of shuffling along, and if the skis are well put on, and the feet kept parallel while moving them over softish snow, you may get along at a speed of four miles an hour, and on slopes your record would far exceed that. The snow-shoes should be covered with reindeer skin, and one should have a pole and know how to use it. Ski-ing is not so difficult to learn as biking, though in both cases a beginner is sure to come to grief now and then.

Far up into the bays, and creeks, and fiords, amidst floating ice, the sturdy, brave yacht was steered, and then a boat would land our heroes. She would be drawn well up, and taking the oarsmen with them, not to mention the dogs, away up the glaciers they would start. They found these a trifle slushy sometimes, and here, of course, ski-ing was out of the question.

When higher up the glens, their admiration of the strange fantastic mountains, with their wild and snow-clad peaks, knew no bounds. In some places, moreover, the silence was intense. It was such a silence as must exist in space itself; and though free from

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superstition, it often made Allan and Rory almost fear to speak. It was this utter solitude of a strange, weird land that was ever around them.

But when they came out on great plains or table-lands the scenery was somewhat changed. Here, if they looked ahead or on each side, they saw hills, cloud-capped as a rule, rising one above the other into the purple distance; but far down below was the sea itself, bounded by vast cliffs of ice, and dotted over with snow-clad bergs, on which rested, here and there, a seal or bladder-nose, or even a great sea-bear.

Foxes, they soon found, lead a very jolly life in summer. There are so many birds to catch. I do not quite know how these foxes exist in winter. Hide and sleep in caves, perhaps, after laying up—to freeze—a goodly supply of gulls.

And it was the tracks of these very foxes that often led the boys to the nests of the birds, through bogs and morasses often enough, and sometimes through fords in rivers of melting snow. These same rivers ran here and there with tremendous rapidity, and at times formed linns or waterfalls whose din was deafening, and the mist from which, floating high above, formed radiant rainbows.

'Would you like to get up those cliffs?' said Allan one day, pointing to some high grey rocks where breeding birds seemed to be in millions, their cries deadening even the roar of the linn.

'There would be no getting up from below, sure,' answered Rory; 'and if it's descending by a rope you'd be, then I'd have to pull you up without an eye in your head, for the birds would pick 'em out.'

Feathers were falling from the cliff, and blowing about on the light breeze like gigantic snowflakes. But Allan could not help gazing with curious eyes towards that wild cliff.

'We'll have to think of it another day,' he said, with a sigh.

'Maybe you'd like to drame about it, Allan. Sure it isn't myself that wouldn't, anyhow.'

When they got into level ground, among 'gulleries,' as I call them, they saw a sight that was certainly striking and strange in the extreme. It was striking in more ways than one, for some of these birds have most punishing bills, and objected in the strongest way possible to having their nests robbed.

But it was on the hills and rocks, after all, where most of the nests were found.

And some of these rocks were of great beauty of colour, and so steep that they looked halves of divided mountains like the letter D, as if some mighty power had sliced a hill in two, carrying one half away and burying it in the deep, dark ocean, and leaving the other standing.

At the foot of one or two of these half-mountains Allan and Rory, who were nearly always together when birdnesting, found mighty cairns of stones or boulders, a perfect chaos, indeed, and it was among these that the foxes found shelter in summer, or lay *perdu*, watching a chance to seize their prey.

The boys had plenty of evidence that such was the case, for one day, in crossing some acres of these boulders, a sudden and awful din arose among the birds overhead. They appeared to have deserted their nests, and were wheeling and shrieking along

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the rock-covered ground. Going on a little, they found that a fox was trying to drag to cover an immense bird. Well, most of these strange birds fight and squabble among each other, but here they were united and unanimous in their determination to rescue, if possible, a fellow-creature.

Allan, revolver in hand, crept cautiously forward and took point-blank aim at a few yards' distance. The bullet entered the neck of 'Tod Lowrie,' and he hardly moved again. His teeth were still fixed in the thigh of the splendid bird, but the latter was speedily released, and the skin and head of that blue-grey fox made a nice little mat and bed for Tronso.

Both Rory and Allan were good cragsmen. They had learned rock-climbing when boys, and now, to procure specimens—one egg only from one nest, mind—they took off both shoes and stockings, for it was warm in the sunshine, roped themselves together, Alpine fashion, and climbed hills and cliffs that from below appeared inaccessible. A man never knows what he can do till he tries. But Rory was the lighter, and always followed after his friend.

The dogs used to be in a great state of mind when their masters went high up on their perilous enterprise. The boatmen found it difficult at times to control Tronso, so impetuous was he, but the others were more tractable, only they lay sighing, as dogs do when they are in trouble, and scarcely ever removed their eyes from the hill.

The flight of tumbler pigeons is beautiful to watch, but here, after they had returned from an egg-hunt and lain down to bask in the sun, our boys found a far greater interest in watching the strange flights

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of the myriads of birds. Each species had its peculiar method.

Not only were the cliffs resplendent in colours, in yellow, green, crimson, orange, and pink, but the boulders below were patched with pretty lichens, while growing between was a species of rough *agrostis* grass.

The nest-hunting expeditions were not always confined to mainland exploration, but to the little islands. Few of these are put down in the maps of Spitzbergen, and many of them are only visible when the summer is at its height.

The boys liked to visit these, taking luncheon with them now, and rifles too, for bears might appear at any time. Those yellow-white hairy monsters are a curious study. An exceedingly free and easy life they lead. The wind, we are told, goeth where it listeth. So does Bruin. Swinging idly across a glacier not far from the sea, standing carelessly on the edge of a snow-clad berg, and gazing away, far away, at the distant horizon, and the smaller bergs between, if he sees something dark on one of these, 'That's a pussy,' says Bruin; 'I'll have a bit.'

He dives into the sea, and I believe the very sharks are afraid to tackle so athletic a monster—only sharks are cowards. I have fallen into the Arctic ocean amidst a pack of them, and they fled in all directions. It is when a man is being hauled up again that the danger is, for then they return with a rush.

Bruin takes his bearings well, and is soon nearly alongside the piece of ice on which the seal lies on his stomach sound asleep, or on his back scratching his chest funnily. The cautious Bruin is soon along-

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side, and the great sea-bear makes a hearty dinner, swallows some snow, and with a grunt of satisfaction lies down to sleep. He spends quite a deal of his time sleeping. Well, you cannot wonder, with no books to read, no letters to write, and no morning paper.

Some of the smaller islands were charmingly patched with Arctic flowers; terns built or scraped their nests here, and even Arctic geese and eider ducks were found.

It was sometimes no easy matter to get alongside these islands, owing to the scores of small bergs which they had to pole out of the way. Once landed, they were well rewarded for their trouble and hard work, whether they found eggs or not; for the scenery was strange and lovely in the extreme.

Farther out to sea, or northwards, the tall and steepled icebergs were of every imaginable shape, and their blue or green sides sparkled in the sunshine. The sea was dark under the mountain shadows, but a rich deep blue where clear of ice, while close to the icebergs it seemed as black as ink.

In deep water—and it was nearly all deep by the cliff sides of the islands—were scores of radiant jelly-fishes, with apparently jewels and gems sparkling under their strange long limbs. They floated or swam on their sides, or did the breast stroke, and dived backwards into the clear purple water, and it was then one could best see their jewels.

There were caves and grottoes that, when they were entered and lit up with torches, were marvels of beauty. Into these the seal would come lisping and 'jabbling,' and the boat could be sculled a long way

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up. The icicles hung from the roof and rose from the snow-white floor, gleaming in the torchlight with all the colours of the rainbow.

Indeed, Rory and Allan fancied themselves in fairyland, or in some enchanted palace, and were loth to leave.

On hills that rose from these small islands they found many nests. But they visited isles that, though clothed with lichens, stonecrops, poppies, and flowers crimson and orange, had not a single bird on them. All was silence here, but for the lap-lapping music of the waves, the hum of the myriads of birds on the mainland, or now and then, coming from the same direction, loud reports or detonations from wide descending glaciers.

One day a bear on the mainland spied them. 'Can't be pussies,' he said to himself. 'Pussies don't walk on their tails. They're bipeds of another order. I shouldn't mind sampling them. I'm a bit peckish, anyhow. Here goes!' Splash! The huge bear has put to sea.

Rory and Allan, with the two men, are sitting near each other yarning. They have just finished dinner, when a man says quietly to Allan:

'Your rifle, sir. Don't move, or he'll make off.'

It was a splendid shot, and the bear floated dead on the water. Then comes the hurry-scurry. Luckily, the dogs have been left behind to-day.

'Tumble in, boys!' cries Allan. 'Bruin will soon sink. Leap, Rory! Shove off! Jump her up, lads! Merrily does it! Merrily moves her!'

They are soon alongside, and Rory throws towards the huge carcase some large grappling-hooks with

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a strong rope attached. The huge dead bear is hauled close up to the quarter, and the rope made fast with a turn or two round a hawser.

To their horror, however, two scaly monsters of the deep appear, Greenland sharks. Then ensues such a fight as I have never seen, save once, in Arctic seas. These terrible creatures seem to know that the bear is dead, and attempt to drag him under. Bang! bang! go Allan's and Rory's revolvers wherever they saw head, or tail, or fin. The splashing alongside is fearful, and while the boys forward fight with boat-hooks, the blood-reddened water is dashed on board, a sickening sight to see. Twice the boat is almost on her beam-ends. If she sinks, our heroes will be heard of no more. But more sharks come now, and will not be denied. The struggle is too unequal. Three sharks are tearing at the carcase, and the boat is once more being dragged over, and is soon lip to lip with the waves.

'Cast off! cast off!' shrieked Allan; 'we are sinking!'

Rory's busy fingers work, but work in vain, so tightened is the knot. Seeing the terrible danger, for she is filling fast, Allan fires his pistol, its muzzle touching the rope. The half-burned strands sever; the boat is saved and precious lives; but never, I believe, had sailor-lads a more narrow escape. They baled out the bloodstained water, and were soon safe on shore.

Carcase of bear and sharks as well had disappeared by this time, and only a dark-red bubbling spot was left on the smooth surface of the sea.

One day Allan and his friend determined to go

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on a somewhat more lengthened cruise, and as they might not get home for dinner, they took extra provisions, a bigger boat, and Vasto with Tronso, just to give these dogs a treat. Clouds were lying low on the mountains, but no danger was feared, for the weather seemed settled. Uncle Jack saw the boat disappear round a distant isle. He saw them not again, for a great bank of fog rolled up from the south, and soon there was no more sea or land. All was one black and blank.

He waited dinner for the young mariners. They came not; and even in the first morning watch those on board listened, but listened in vain, for the sound of oars. Nothing could be seen, and nothing was heard, save ever and anon the creaking and groaning of the slowly descending glacier.

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CHAPTER XX

A TERRIBLE RIVER

'GIVE us a song!' cried Allan cheerily. 'Luckily, we have a compass. Directly west lies our island, and once there we'll have a good time of it, in spite of the mist. A song, Rory, a song!'

Rory required no second bidding, but to the tune of *The Last Rose of Summer* struck comically into the humorous *Groves of Blarney*.

In about two hours' time—Allan with his hand on the tiller and his eyes on the little compass all the time—they reached the island on which they had made up their minds to picnic, and landed in a little shingly bay. It was terribly dark and dismal, however, and owing to the density of the fog there was nothing to be done but wait.

And wait they did for a weary time. There was not a breath of wind at present, and there fell on their ears, in the deep silence, only the gentle rippling of the waves and the distant plaintive cries of sea-birds that sounded like spirit voices in the air.

Dinner was cooked, and a delightful one it was—roast guillemot, pork and potatoes, with preserved green peas as a 'fixing.'

Of course there was no night at this season of the year, so it was no wonder that Allan looked frequently

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at his watch, as the time wore on and on, and the mist was as ghostly and dense as ever. Rory sang many a droll song, and played many a ranting air on his flute, to while away the time. But, somehow, there was a depression amounting almost to sadness in every heart, and even Vasto appeared to feel it, though nothing save death itself could damp the ardour of the daft wee Irish terrier.

'I think the fog is lifting,' said one of the hands.

'I feel sure of it,' said ardent Rory.

Allan only shook his head.

'Well,' he said, after a time, 'I move that we now make a dash for the mainland. I shall steer pretty well to the northward till we come to the cliffs, then south alongside them till we reach the fiord, and so we shall reach the ship.'

This would entail very many dangers, and well the young sailor knew it; but to wait in this seagirt solitude was awful!

Their venture never took place, however. For while he was still speaking a low wind began to whisper and to bend the stalks of the grass and wild flowers. A few flakes of snow fell. There was a clap of thunder and diffused lightning in the mist. Tronso cuddled up to Vasto's side, as if for sympathy and protection.

Then, without a word of warning, down came a summer squall. The cold became intense; and though the wind lasted but a little time, the snow was heaped up around them with the force of the blizzard until they were almost buried. Then all was silent again, except for higher waves that broke with a louder hum on the beach.

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'Is the boat safe, think ye, Allan?'

Allan turned pale.

'Mercy on us, Rory,' he cried; 'I had not thought of that!'

'She was well drawn up?'

'Yes, yes; but let us run down to the beach and end this suspense.'

They had not far to go, and Vasto was their guide. He went bounding on through the snow as if he really liked it, little Tronso making a good second, but wellnigh buried alive. They found the little bay. They searched round it, and round it. In vain! The tidal waves had carried the boat far away towards the nor'land ice.

Slowly they returned to their snowy camp, and the hands there knew, from the expression on Allan's face, that the boat was gone. Then came a long and terrible time. The snow melted, it is true, but the ground did not dry, and the fog was as close aboard of them as ever. What would they do? What could men in such a position do but wait—for rescue or for death?

Two days went past. The food that had been doled out was finished, and they had only the snow, which still lay in hollows among the cliffs, to subsist upon. But the mist showed no signs of lifting. Fogs of this sort are far from uncommon in July, and to the westward and south they may last for many weeks. It would be impossible to exaggerate the sufferings of the poor fellows that now lay almost helpless on this weird and solitary isle.

But help came at last; for awakening one day out of a dream-haunted slumber, in which he fancied him-

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self toiling on and on, tired and weary, over seemingly endless tracts of snow-clad tableland, with mountains in the distance that seemed to recede as he advanced, Allan sat up and rubbed his eyes. Sunshine all around him—sunshine shimmering on the sea, and on the white wings of gulls that screamed more gladly now; sunshine bringing bright shades of orange and crimson to the flowers; sunshine bringing rays of its joy to his heart of hearts.

'Rory, Rory, awake; look up, a boat is coming! Hurrah! lad, we are saved! Rouse up, men!'

Rory started to his feet, but immediately staggered and fell, so cramped and weak were his legs. But even now he must make a laughing remark.

'Sure, it's tipsy I am entoirely,' he said. 'Allan, me boy, was I dining out last night?'

'That you were, lad; but, hurrah! we'll dine in now.'

'Speak to them,' he continued—'speak to them, Vasto. Speak to the boat.'

And the dog's sonorous voice went ringing over the water, and Uncle Jack waved his hat in response.

Soon all were safe on board, and told the story of their sufferings; while Allan bemoaned the loss of the boat, but took all the blame on his own shoulders.

The boat was found, however, far away to the north; and in a few days the lads were once more as well as ever.

. . . . . .

It may be easily understood why I could not give even an epitome of our heroes' adventures in this wild but beautiful island. Such description would

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need a lordly volume for itself alone. My chief aim is to give a correcter notion of the scenery and condition of Spitzbergen and its sister isles than that which usually obtains in Britain.

'What do you think Spitzbergen is like?' I asked a friend, not two hours ago.

'Well, I haven't been up there,' he answered, 'same as you. But my impression is, that it is a little island far away towards the Pole, hilly perhaps, but for ever mantled over with ice and snow.'

'Perhaps,' I said, with a sigh, 'if more honest geography and geology, and less bad French, were taught in our schools, boys would grow up with some knowledge of the world in which they live.'

But a description of Spitzbergen might be briefly summed up as follows: A vast tract of country, the age of which is at present unknown, but will be found out by geology; an island once clad in forests and ferns and flowers, inhabited possibly by a race of human beings far inferior even than the Eskimos of our own time; woods in which wild bears of many species roamed free and happy, while song-birds lilted their beautiful notes on every bush and tree; then the gradual oncoming of a great ice-age, during which all life perished, saving the seeds that went to sleep—a great sleep of almost universal death, and which lasted for, mayhap, thousands of years or more; but a sleep from which this land is once more awakening; and who may even guess what its future may be?—though all things are possible to Him who made the universe. But an island, at the present day, on which summer smiles most sweetly, and calls flowers and lichens from the grey-brown earth to

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bask in the sun's warm rays; an island where many a range of snow-capped hills and mountains tower high into heaven's dark blue; an island of inland ice, and surrounded by bergs of every shape and hue; an island of glaciers that move and shriek and groan in summer; an isle of sea-birds; an isle, moreover, of sport and adventure, for while the sun continues to shine, the rocks, the hills, and the black-blue sea itself, teem with life, and the joy and soul of life; an island, finally, that may yet be habitable all the year round to adventuresome men; but, alas! an island where in winter broods a silence and a darkness ofttimes as deep as the grave itself.

Yet in its favour must I say that even then it is often lit up by bright stars, by moonlight, and by the most brilliant of coloured lights—the mysterious Aurora Borealis.

. . . . . .

Though I have chiefly mentioned the adventures of Allan and Rory in my description of Spitzbergen, it must not be thought that the doctor, the baron, Ross, and Uncle Jack remained all the time on ship-board. On the contrary, all four made frequent trips inland with, or rather *on*, ski. When the journey was to extend for a few days, Rory and Allan, who were now to all intents and purposes inseparable friends, remained on board as ship-keepers.

Both Vasto and Czarina assisted the two men in dragging along the light sleighs containing tents, arms, and provisions. Crevasses, deep and awful, often gaped in their way, and these they could only cross by a bridge of snow—if they were lucky enough to find one. My own impression is that a snow

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bridge is a most treacherous thing to trust to. Sometimes the sledges stuck in these, and all hands had to pull, with probably the awful bridge trembling beneath their feet. But splendid indeed was the ski-ing, when they came on a tableland covered with snow, especially if slightly on the down grade.

Mountain climbing was tried on several occasions by the younger members of the mess. They were always glad to get back to supper and a sleep—hungry, jaded, and somewhat disappointed. For the difficulties of ascent were bad enough, the view generally imperfect, the danger often great—from falling avalanches and even rocks.

Besides all this, there was always the mortification of seeing scores of peaks far higher than that which they had scaled, and apparently far easier to negotiate.

Autumn came at last, however, and no one could say that he had not enjoyed himself well. They had been healthy, too, and very happy in consequence, so that one evening—the sun set now, there were starry nights, and Aurora—when Baron Ranzikoff talked to Uncle Jack about bearing up for home, Allan and Rory both felt somewhat sad.

For, dear reader, the snow spirit had cast its spell or glamour over their souls, as it does over all who visit the mysterious regions around the Pole, and they told Uncle Jack that they hoped to return here another day, and even to spend the winter frozen into the solid pack.

. . . . . .

As far as they could they had steamed to the north of Spitzbergen, on the east side as well as the west,

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but did not circumnavigate the island, owing to the awful and threatening appearance of the great green pinnacled bergs.

The last adventure that our two sailor-lads had is worth recording. They had gone out after breakfast in the gig, which was long and fleet, and manned by four right sturdy seamen, as brave and fearless as their officers. They had steered nor'ward, and west, in a direction they had taken only once before. After a ten-mile row, without adventure of any sort, they lay well off from the vast wall of snow-capped ice that now bounded the shore on the right.

Stones and sand had been placed in the bottom of the boat, Isle of Skye fashion, and on this they built a fire large enough to cook a delightful kind of hotch-potch, with pork and guillemot in it. All sea-birds, remember, must be skinned before being cooked.

Dinner was served, and they were just sipping their coffee, when a report came from a point in the great ice-wall as loud as that made by the heaviest artillery. Another and another followed at intervals.

'We are too near that cliff,' said Harrison, an old Arctic voyager.

He dipped a bucket in the sea as he spoke, quenched the fire, and seized his oar. He was stroke.

'We'd better sheer off, sir,' he said, in quick decisive tones.

'Out oars!' cried Allan, seizing the tiller ropes.

When about two hundred yards farther out, Harrison ceased pulling, and the others, of course, followed his example.

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The reports from the ice face were getting heavier, and intermingled with them was a shrieking sound louder than a thousand hooters could have made.

'What does it all mean, Harrison?'

Hardly had he spoken before the great gleaming cliff that formed the cape—hundreds of feet in height it was—became detached from the parent glacier. Part of it came thundering down with a noise that was deafening, but the main portion sailed majestically out to sea. The commotion, the foam, the spray, looked like some mighty Niagara.

'Better to head round, sir, and face the wave!'

They did so in time. The waves were like the doldrums of the tropics. The boat seemed to rise steeple high, and sink next moment into a trough that made the next advancing wave look like a mountain. It was a whole hour before the terrible commotion subsided.

They went on now, and soon after came to a great gap in the ice-floe or glacier. Here was a river of swift water rolling down into the sea. It was about twenty to thirty feet wide, where it joined the ocean, but seemed to narrow considerably higher up. The walls were perpendicular, and of green-blue ice.

'Shall we venture up, Harrison?'

'I think we can do it. It will be something for you to talk about, young gentlemen, when you get home.'

The boat's head was now turned. The pull was a hard one, but the men were well equal to the task. Little did they know at this moment that, figuratively speaking, they were entering, not into the lion's jaws, but into the very jaws, apparently, of death itself.

The deep dark current was a winding one, and save for the rush of the water and its turmoil no sound was to be heard, and then, looking above them, up the green slippery walls, only a long slit of light was visible.

Presently, however, after a pull of probably eight or nine hundred yards, a different kind of sound fell on their ears, and, rounding a bend of this marvellous river, they found themselves face to face with a mighty foaming cataract. No scene in this world that ever I have witnessed could equal that now before and around them. It was terrible in its grandeur, the walls of ice on every side, the slit of daylight above, the gloom and darkness below, and that white roaring linn in front!

How long they stayed to gaze on it they never could say, the boatmen rowing only enough to keep her stock still.

Rory put his hand to his eyes at last:

'Go round, go round!' he cried. 'I think it's going mad entirely I am!'

In a minute more the waterfall was out of sight, but to their consternation the river was evidently narrowing. The darkness increased momentarily, and on looking up the men noticed that the long slit of twilight, high above, was a mere line or thread, and though it got broader now and then, it did not attain the width it had as they rowed up river.

The reason was undoubtedly that the separation of the ice cape, and the terrible commotion caused by the plunge of the baby iceberg into the sea, had in some way affected the whole wall of ice, and that, horrible to relate, the gorge was closing up!

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Terror seemed now to seize upon every heart, and surely never did men row with greater strength or vim than they rowed now. Oh, how far, far away the sea appeared to be! Will they ever reach it?

Apparently not. They are not yet round the bend, and now one oar gets smashed against the great ice-wall on the starboard side. All oars have to be shipped.

Bending forward, Allan sits grim and determined, and still holds the lines. Everything depends on his steering. Should she but touch the closing ice, all is over. It is dark now, or nearly, and the river rushes more madly, as it gets more and more narrowed.

Dark! so dark!

Then——

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CHAPTER XXI

PATAGONIA AND THE LAND OF FIRE

OUT of the darkness of the closing gorge, and into the full blaze of Arctic sunshine. But surely Providence had taken the helm. For just as all seemed lost, poor Allan fainted, and fell forward. He opened his eyes, saw they were safe, and that Rory had laid him tenderly down in the bottom of the boat, and placed a pillow of canvas under his head.

He slept now for fully half an hour. The terribly narrow escape that he had, and the strain on his energies, had caused a strange drowsiness to creep over him, and he did well to slumber a little while. But he awakened fresh and clear-brained, and with the old smile on his handsome young face. Still, he shuddered just a little when he thought of the darkness, the torrent of black water, and the gradually closing ice.

. . . . . .

The Czarina bore up for home about a week after this, and so our heroes left this strange, strange land, perhaps—who knows?—for ever and a day.

One word about the closing of the ice-gorge, which,

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as we have already seen, arose from natural causes. The river, dammed below, formed an immense lake interiorly, which, in a few days' time, forced a passage over its banks, and went surging on towards the sea in a new bed, which fell over the green icy cliffs, down straight into the ocean, forming a cascade of such height and such grandeur as one seldom sees, even in this far northern land of wonders. This gigantic waterfall was the last thing the lads looked upon, as the baron's beautiful yacht steamed south-west and away through the dark-blue, berg-studded ocean.

The birds wheeled round them until night began to fall, then flew back to their lonesome cliffs. A huge bear, floating on one of the small icebergs, lifted a lazy head, and gazed after them for a while, yawned, and fell asleep once more. The last great beast they saw, as the shadows of night fell around them, was a huge black shape—it was no ordinary whale—pursuing his lonesome way from west to east. Then darkness fell, which, to-night, would have been intense save for the brightness of planets and stars. And everybody seemed happy all over the ship.

The captain had given orders for the main brace to be spliced, and the men below, around the galley fire, smoked, and yarned, sang and toasted wives and sweethearts in the old fashion, that will never die out as long as Britannia owns a ship at sea.

'Well, well, boys,' said Uncle Jack, as, with the exception of Allan, whose watch it was on deck, all sat near the stove, 'and don't you think we have enjoyed a rather good time of it on the whole?'

There was only one answer to that question; then

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all began to talk of far-off bonnie Scotland, and the green-banked shores of merrie England in the south. And so with coffee—to which the older men—Uncle Jack, Ross, and the baron—could hardly be blamed for adding their pipes, the night passed quietly, happily, hopefully away, until it was time to turn in.

. . . . . .

One evening, three months after, they were all seated just as they are now, but on the large and bonnie orlop deck of Castle Indolence. Yet neither Vasto nor Czarina was here, nor, need I add, their masters. But both Ross and the baron were expected every minute, and dinner was almost ready to lay. Mrs. Adair sat in her rocking-chair, and Allan was resting his head on her lap, as if he were a boy once again.

Little daft Tronso sat watching at the curtained doorway. He knew as well as any one that old friends were coming. Yes, and long ere any one else heard a footstep he did, and began to bark most joyfully indeed. Then in rushed a hairy hurricane—Vasto and the beautiful Czarina. Right jolly was their welcome.

Ailie was most tastefully and prettily dressed to-night. There was a deeper flush on her bonnie face, and a brighter sparkle in her eye as she shook hands with the baron. At least poor Rory thought so. Bar his extra height, and that slight moustache of his, he seemed to have altered but slightly in appearance, and none in heart and character.

He was still impulsive, and this very moment he managed to escape from the company. It was a clear frosty night, but he minded not the cold. He made

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his way to the top of the cliff, that frowned grey over the star-spangled ocean, and sat down to think. Sadly too.

'Ay,' he said to himself, 'it is myself that knows right well how the clouds are drifting. How pleased she was to see him! Well, why should a poor Irish boy aspire to such as she? Beauty and virtue—these same are her fortune, and she'll be the Baroness Ranzikoff. Not a pretty name to go to church with. But, bother you, Rory! is it the father's son of you that would be mourning over the loss of one beautiful fish when there are thousands more in the ocean?'

Rory whipped out his flute. Maybe the airs he played were melancholy, but they restored and comforted him; and when he returned to Castle Indolence he was his happy old self once more.

'Yes,' said Ross, after dinner, 'and I sail in springtime. It is a wild life I may lead, but I am to return after a time, if I do not succeed. I shall hope for the best, however, for surely the glorious Light should extend to even savages in the uttermost regions of the earth.'

'True,' said the baron musingly; 'and you are to be missionary to the savages of Tierra del Fuego?'

Ross nodded.

'I have read much about this strange land, and would like to visit it. In the brave Czarina we need fear nothing. And, Ross, my brother,' he added, 'I shall take you out.'

'A thousand thanks, Baron Ranzikoff!'

The month was January, and stormy were the winds that blew up Channel, high the waves that broke and roared on the rocks far down beneath the old

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windmill. But it was agreed that the Czarina should be brought round from Glasgow in a few days, manned, provisioned, and made ready for the long, long voyage to the southern seas and land of fire. This was done.

Then passed a quiet and happy month, Uncle Jack being the constant companion of the good old skippers, Bernard, and Tom Stunsail. But the strangest part of the fitting-out of the yacht has yet to be told, for Ailie and her maid were to be passengers. Even a wilful man must have his way, but a wilful girl generally succeeds in getting hers without much trouble.

Mrs. Adair knew, as mothers do, that a beautiful daughter is apt to get married. It is fate, and she bowed to it. She kept up her heart bravely. She would not be lonely, she said, a sister was coming to live with her, and bring her children, and the same dear old seafarers would still be the keepers and defenders of Castle Indolence. A swallow can fly over one thousand miles a day. Our thoughts can beat that record, and can fly faster than time itself.

Let us see, then; the Czarina left England in February, and taking it very easy, and calling at many ports, reached the entrance to the Straits of Magellan in three months' time.

What a bright and cheerful home on the ocean wave Ailie had made it for all hands! She had turned out an excellent sailor, and was never indeed one day ill. She really ranked with, but under, her good Uncle Jack, and many a little improvement she carried out. She merely suggested this, that, or the

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other, to her uncle, the captain, and managed very nicely and neatly, too, to bring him round to her way of thinking, while all the time the bold skipper thought he was having *his* own way.

She was kind, and perhaps slightly condescending, to even the baron, whom, after all, she looked upon as somewhat an invalid; she was a sister to Rory figuratively, as well as in reality to Allan, and gave Rory much more of his own way than her brother got.

At heart Ailie was a true Christian, and it is little wonder, therefore, that brave, hardy Ross McLean—who, with his life in his hand, was going into a savage land to spread the Truth, if those terrible savages could but receive it—had her heartfelt sympathy and her prayers.

And Ailie, too, was a great favourite with the men, and many an extra little treat she got them, or rather commanded the doctor to grant them, when the weather grew stormy, wet, and wild.

Bright and cheerful, too, were the long dark evenings or forenights, when all who could get below sat around in the cosy drawing-room saloon to yarn, to sing, or to listen while Ailie played and the baron sang, Rory chiming in with his sweet, sad flute. Alas! that I should have to record how this pleasant life on board was all too soon to cease.

But let me tell the reader first, that our good people and brave mariners lingered long in Patagonia, and although wild winter was raging here, the younger and hardier officers enjoyed excellent sport. And thus passed away pleasantly enough the gloomiest time of all the year in these regions drear and cold.

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Then came spring sunshine, with balmy winds that lured the rovers away on many a long trip to sea. But flowers and strangely beautiful grasses now bloomed on Patagonian plains.

The very sound of the word Patagonia makes me long to linger here; but the temptation to do so must be resisted, for the simple reason that I have still much that is interesting to tell, and that is intimately concerned with the fate of my heroes.

Many people, however, are as much in darkness concerning this strange, but really rich, wild country, as they are about Timbuctoo. Patagonia has been called the land of giants, and we are told that it is the name of a place in South America. There is a little truth in the first allegation, and the second is true, though rather hazy and indefinite. Giant men we find in Patagonia, big horses too; but our lads of Northumbria or the boys of bonnie Scotland could give them points in athleticism, and beat them too, and our Clydesdale horses would make the Patagonian ones look small indeed, though they might not run so swiftly.

If, however, you take a glance at a map of South America, you will find a vast tract of land lying north of the Straits of Magellan and to the east of the Chilian mountain ranges or Andes; that is Patagonia. It is divided into two great provinces, the government of Chubut in the north, and that of Santa Cruz in the south.

Our people made a point of visiting both. Maggie, who was Ailie's English maid, had all an English girl's curiosity; and when Ailie told her about some of the wonderful sights to be seen in this land, the

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guanaco, the llamas, the American ostriches, the vast plains, and deserts, and mountains——

'Well, miss,' said Maggie, 'I don't care much myself for ostriches and such, only, maybe, just to pull a few feathers out of their long necks; but I just would like dearly to see how the people are dressed.'

It was not, however, with this last intention, or to gratify Maggie, that the Czarina was anchored off all the chief ports of Patagonia. There was much to interest every one, and the inhabitants of towns were found to be a strange, mixed lot, very many Welsh; so this latter fact makes me believe that if the climate were not so treacherous, or, in the far-off future, when it does change, as change it must, Patagonia would and will become a wealthy country.

Then there is gold in it, and gold in the Andes, and gold, too, in the wild and terrible land of the Tierra del Fuegians, where bold Ross McLean would, after a time, be put on shore.

Rory did not long to be rich for riches' sake, but only because—so he thought—Ailie might then marry him. Poor, silly, love-sick Irish boy! I think we must excuse him, but he did not know Ailie yet.

I think it was really on Ailie's account that the baron stayed so long in Patagonia, as he feared the cold and the storms farther south might be more than she could bear.

But the chief actors of our tale had much grand sport in the interior, where they went in company with the wildest-looking guides that ever it had fallen to their lot to meet. Both Rory and Allan could ride well, while the baron himself seemed part and parcel of the horse on which he sat. There was

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a glorious sense of freedom experienced by all while careering over the deserts in search of game. The boys really could not at such times disentangle their minds from the idea that they themselves were wild Indians.

In a month or two they became more expert on horseback, and could throw the lasso fairly well. Maggie did get her ostrich feathers, but it had not been from the neck that Rory had pulled them. Indeed, the South American ostrich is the rhea, and it is not so finely plumaged as its brother in Africa. But Maggie was pleased, nevertheless. As for the dress of the aborigines—well, it was romantic enough, but scarcely what even Maggie would have cared to go to church in.

. . . . . .

Beautiful weather came at last, and the summer was almost in its prime, when the Czarina steamed quietly into the Straits of Magellan.

Many a gallant ship has been lost here, however, and many a poor vessel in distress has drifted on to the wild, inhospitable shores of Tierra del Fuego, on the south, only to be boarded and the crew made prisoners by the savages, and taken inland to be killed, as butchers kill pigs, and—devoured, for these creatures are, many tribes at all events, cannibals.

A stranded ship is robbed of everything that these canoemen think of value, then she is set on fire, while, on the beach, in the awful glare, the creatures wave their weapons over their heads, yell or howl, and dance like frenzied demons.

They seem to go mad, indeed, and I have been told of one case in which, while their vessel was

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blazing high to the heavens, and casting a lurid glare on the sands and the dreary woodlands behind, the crew lay near, bound with withies, and having their shoulders staked and roped to the ground. Suddenly one terrible savage hacked an arm off a prisoner, and danced around with it. His example was followed by others, and soon the sufferings of the poor wretches were at an end. It was better thus.

And it was among these very men that the brave missionary, Ross McLean, hoped to dwell. There are those who rail and scoff, not at Christianity—the greatest fool on earth would not do that—but at Christians themselves, quite forgetting that it is these very men who, with a calmer and cooler bravery than soldiers can ever know, carry light into the darkest spots of earth, and are therefore the pioneers of an enlightened civilization, bound in future years to spread from end to end of the world.

After visiting many places of interest in the Straits, an attempt was made to land the missionary in a strange, wild, woodland village, among the canoemen. At first a great effort was made to pacify them; but all in vain. They would take presents, they would barter and sell otter-skins, but in all other respects they were implacable savages. They would have none of the missionary, and as to leave him there among so resolute and bloodthirsty a race could only have one ending, it was decided to sail farther south.

Ross, indeed, had *carte blanche* from the Society which had sent him out. Little did those on board know what was before them, as the good yacht's prow was turned east again once more.

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CHAPTER XXII

FACE TO FACE WITH SAVAGES

LIFE on board went on now much as before, and Ailie continued to be the light of the ship; and, despite certain gloomy forebodings, every one tried to be happy and jolly.

'I'm sad when I think of you,' said Ailie to the brave missionary, as they sat together one day on the cushioned seat by the skylight. It was warm enough to have an awning spread, and right glad were the three dogs to seek shade and shelter under it.

'Sorry for me, little sister?' said Ross, smiling.

'Yes; and I pray for you, and always will.'

'May Heaven bless you, Ailie, for that same! but do not be afraid. See this little Book?'

He took it from his pocket as he spoke. The little Book was the Bible.

'That is the torch,' he said quietly, 'with which I hope, with the help of Heaven, to light a great fire among the heathen of the far southern islands. Once lit, Ailie, it will not die out. And I am to stay among the Youghans but long enough to see the blaze spring up; then I shall return to England, and younger men than I will be sent out to fan the

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flames. So do not fear for me. Yet,' he added, laying his hand gently on hers, 'I thank and bless you, Ailie, for your prayers.'

The ship at this time was steaming southwards, not a great way off the coast of Tierra del Fuego, and next morning they reached the town, or rather the mining camp, of El Paramo, and here they anchored, Baron Ranzikoff being desirous of seeing as much of the world as possible before, as he said, returning to Russia and settling down on his beautiful estate on the banks of the rolling Dnieper. But between you and me, reader, I do not think there was very much 'settle' in the baron.

The history of El Paramo is very interesting, and there is little doubt the place will in time become a great gold-mining centre, for remember, reader, all the gold in the world is not bottled up in Klondyke, nor in Alaska either.

At present, the largest amount of gold in Paramo is found on the beach, in beds of no great thickness. The gold is contained in black sand under layers of gravel. What I think is this—gold must be washed down from somewhere. When you find golden sand on a beach, depend upon it there are nuggets as big as sea-boots in the far interior. There are plains and forests and rising hills in the place, and among these, I believe, there is gold for the gathering.

But, after all, as the rough miners believe, it may be beneath the sea, though very near the shore. For ever after a storm a fresh layer of black sand is cast up. Well, nothing is impossible nowadays to the might and the science of engineering. Seas may be dammed back at low tide, and shafts sunk, and thus

the earth, which is under the control of man, be compelled to give up its treasure.

Southward now, or rather SSE., sailed the bonnie yacht under as big a spread of canvas as could be hoisted, for the wind was fair, while sky and sea were blue; and many a lovely sea-bird flew around, some even alighting on the yard-arms.

Allan and Rory were astonished to meet many of their old Arctic friends here, or their brothers and sisters. But I myself am of opinion that the only real 'citizens of the world' are seagulls, and that they are in the habit of migrating even from Pole to Pole. They fly at a tremendous speed when beak-on to the places they mean to visit and to breed in.

We may fancy a beautiful gull saying to his beautiful wife, before the commencement of the season:

'Well, my dear, where do you think you would like to go to this year? There is quite a crowd going south.'

'Well, love,' the wife replies, 'I think I should like the Antarctic for a change.'

So away they fly one fine morning with a brave company of neighbours—a kind of Cook's excursion, you know, only they have no tickets to take, and they are free from a great many other worries incidental to human beings when travelling. They don't even need boxes, bags, nor provisions, for on the islands where they may alight, or even in the ocean itself, they find all the food they need.

'How nice to be a sea-bird!' said Allan one evening to Ross McLean, as he was talking somewhat in the foregoing strain.

'Or a swallow,' suggested McLean. 'Just think of

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it. No sooner have they reared their families in Britain, which they come to—not for food, mind, but that their young may be hatched in a bracing atmosphere—than they start off for the sunny shores of Africa, &c. They have first and foremost, however, to teach their feathered children to fly, and to make young athletes of them.

'So when the weather begins to get cold and the days grow shorter, we suddenly find, some fine morning, that all have fled.'

'Happy they!' said Rory.

'Yes; and seeing that they can fly two thousand miles a day, then, if they have fine weather and no sudden storms, they may breakfast in our country and be home for supper.'

. . . . . .

Farther to the south, though the weather continued warm in the sunshine, the Czarina encountered gale after gale, with calms between. The wind was seldom fair, so that it was sometimes almost impossible for the good yacht to make a knot an hour of headway.

But at long last the ship got round the most southerly point of Tierra del Fuego itself, or rather a long and dangerous island beyond this, Uncle Jack being determined not to risk the yacht and valuable lives by worming his way through intricate and dangerous channels.

He told Ross McLean that he hoped to land him near to Ushooahia in a few days.

'I am ready,' said Mac meekly. 'I have only my fishing-tackle, my shot-gun, and my bag. For no doubt I will have to make some additions to my

larder. The Youghans are, I believe, but poorly provided for in the matter of food, and, strange to say, they do not study French cookery-books.'

Ross was really anxious now to have all farewells said, and to be landed for good among his 'parishioners,' as he was pleased to style them.

After landing McLean, it was Baron Ranzikoff's pleasure that the Czarina should sail away to the west, and cruise to the nor'ard among the lovely isles of the Pacific Ocean. This for six months. Then back to Ushooahia (pronounced Oo-shoo-ah-ee-ah) to pick up Ross. Well, man proposes, but God disposes.

One evening, while steaming eastwards against half a gale of wind, with every one below as happy and gay as I believe people can only be at sea, suddenly there fell a deep silence over the ship. I perhaps should not say 'deep silence,' but those who have been on board a steamer when, without a warning of any kind, the engines cease to work, will understand me. There was still the roaring of the wind through rigging and cordage, and the swishing sound of the waves alongside, but our heroes missed the rattle of the revolving screws and the thrill of machinery.

They had broken down. No one could doubt it. Even the dogs seemed to understand this, to say nothing of Ailie's maid, Maggie.

'Oh, indeed, miss,' said the latter, 'I can't wonder at it. Why don't they always put on the brake and stop the ship all night, instead of going on in the dark? For, indeed, miss, what with the rattling of the hengines, the roaring of the chimneys, and the

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men growling and taking up cinders, a decent young person like me can hardly get e'er a wink of sleep.'

'All hands set sail!'

This was the voice of Uncle Jack himself, shouting through his speaking-trumpet, which could be heard high above the roaring of the wild north-wester.

The next quarter of an hour was a noisy and most uncomfortable one for all on board. Never did a ship roll more. She was heavy, though active, and so she seemed to wallow in the trough of the waves. The Czarina had no intention of broaching-to, for all that, for presently everything was safe apparently, and she pitched now—with a long easy motion—and things that had been tumbling all over the deck below were set straight again.

Soon after this the captain came below, wet and shining like a boatman beetle, in his oilskins. He called to the steward, and soon got out of these, then entered the saloon smiling. With the usual kindness that dwelt in that big heart of his, he tried to reassure Ailie, and even got her to sit down to the piano, beckoning to Rory to join her with the flute.

This passed the evening slowly away, yet Ailie knew the ship was in danger, and earnestly she prayed that night that He who can hold the sea in the hollow of His hand would keep them safe till morning light, and calm the troubled ocean. But well she knew, too, that the great Being she addressed, with the tears rolling over her cheeks, does not always think it for our well-being even in this world to answer prayer in the way we wish.

The storm seemed to wax fiercer and howl louder and louder, as she lay down. But the very motion

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of the ship caused a deep sleep soon to fall over her. Not a dreamless one, however. She was wandering once more through the forests that overshadow the queenly Tay, with Allan and Rory. The golden-brown and sweet-scented furze were all in bloom, and linnets sang on every bush. In the woods and high among the pines the cushat croodled lovingly to his bonnie mate, and sweetly shone the sun on rock, on haugh and brae.

A pleasant dream indeed! But oh, the fearful awakening! The vessel with a grating noise, louder even than the howthering wind, suddenly stood still, trembling like an aspen-leaf from stem to stern. It was just at the darkest hour of this dismal night—one bell in the morning watch. Right well every one knew that the Czarina was doomed, but as to her whereabouts not even the captain himself could guess.

She was fast among rocks, that was all he could say. If these rocks were in mid-ocean, the vessel must soon break up, and in the sea that was then running and in so heavy a hurricane no boat could live. He, like every one else, must wait for daylight, hoping and praying that the very worst might not befall them. Meanwhile, all was done that could be done. She was battened down, for every seventh wave made a clean breach over her, and all but swept her decks.

In another hour the gale seemed somewhat lessened in force, and there were rifts in the sky through which bright stars shone. Ever-changing rifts, that is, for one or two would be speedily obliterated by the black racing clouds, while others opened up astern. But the indistinct glimmer afforded just

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sufficient light to ply the axe, and ere long the wreckage of fore and main masts was cleared away, and the captain breathed a little more easily; for clogged with these timbers there was greater danger of the vessel's drifting back on the lift of a wave and sinking immediately stern foremost in the deep, dark water under the stern.

To make things if possible a little more certain, a kedge anchor or two were thrown overboard forward, and warped tight. In doing this perhaps the good skipper had little else in his mind save keeping his thoughts employed.

But now, leaving the unfortunate ship in charge of Allan, Uncle Jack lifted a morsel of tarpaulin, and made his way below to the saloon, where he found Ailie and her maid, their faces pale as death, shivering before the fire, and Rory trying to comfort them. The honest surgeon was forward, and in the galley by the dim light of a hurricane lantern, and assisted by the cook and steward, was doing the best that he could for three wounded sailors. One other had already died in his hands, and had been drawn to the side.

Uncle Jack even now tried to look cheerful. Both girls clung to his arm and entreated him to tell them the worst, the *very, very worst*, and they would try to bear it.

'Oh,' cried poor Maggie, 'are we going to the bottom?'

'Why, my child, we're at the bottom already; hard and fast on the rocks.'

'And will the whales and the sharks, and the great sea-serpents come upstairs, and eat us all?'

Uncle Jack patted her and laughed.

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'You're safe enough,' he said, 'if you'll only sit down, and let poor little me have a biscuit and a mouthful of coffee.'

In the absence of the steward the baron became waiter. He was as quiet and cool as a cucumber.

. . . . . .

Morning broke slowly, ever so slowly, but it came at last, and then the shipwrecked mariners could see the nature of their situation and count the chances of their being saved. Let me describe the former in a few words.

The sky was now quite clear, and the wind had gone down from a hurricane to half a gale, but seas like mountain peaks went singing past, only, owing to the tide being lower, did not break inboard. By these watery peaks the blood-red sun on the south-eastern horizon was constantly being eclipsed.

But it was shorewards that every eye was turned. And there was a shingly beach, with green banks behind and beautiful woods, the trees in which reminded Allan and Ross somewhat of those that rise aloft from the banks of the Tay, for they grew halfway up the rugged mountain sides. No signs of life just then. The bulwarks were broken and torn as if the ship had been shelled, and the crew stood shivering around the fo'c'sle, looking weary, dejected, and cold.

'We must lower the boats,' said Uncle Jack, 'and make a dash for the shore, for I fear that with the next rising tide she will slip, or be dashed to pieces where she lies.'

'In face of these shall we land?' said the baron quietly.

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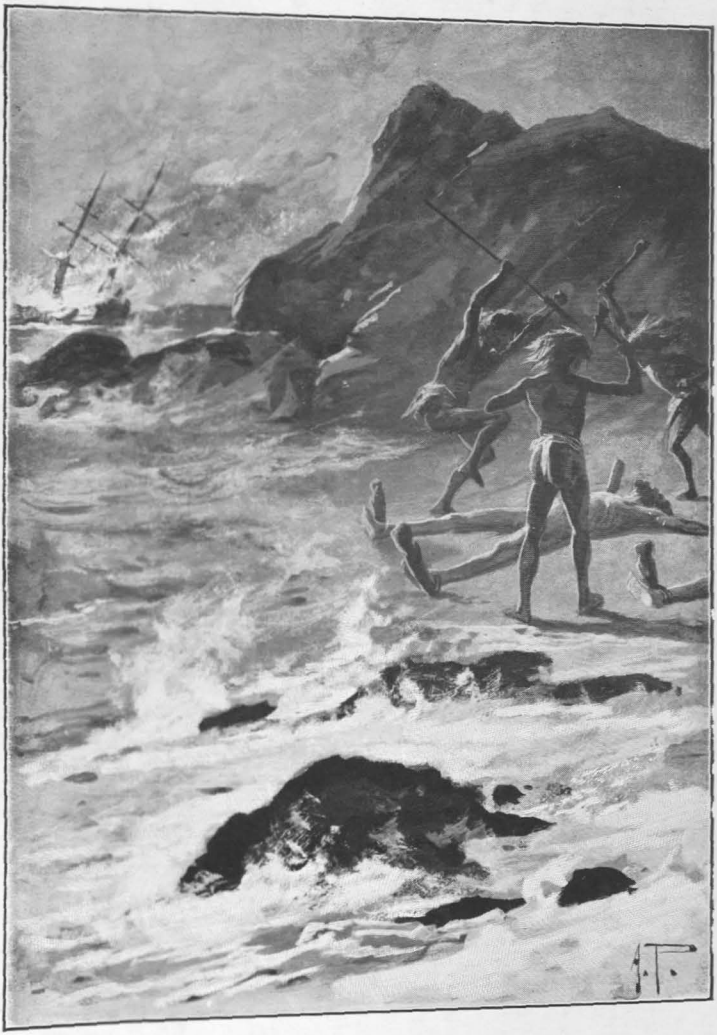

THE SAVAGES WERE BRANDISHING SPEARS AND BOWS.

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The captain and others looked beachwards once more. The shore was not more than three hundred yards from the vessel. But it was no longer deserted. At least one hundred savages, half-naked or clad in skins, were there. Dancing, yelling—their voices heard high over the sound of wind and wave—and brandishing spears and bows.

The captain's face fell just for a moment. 'Boys,' he said, 'we must dare all. It is for dear life!'

'We are ready.'

Next minute the order was given to 'man and arm the boats.'

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CHAPTER XXIII

ROSS McLEAN AND HIS PARISHIONERS

THE boats were armed, provisioned, and safely lowered at last—three in all; but there was no excitement, no terror even, and Ailie proved herself a worthy daughter of her soldier father. Maggie was different, however. On being lowered into one of the boats she fainted. The boat had shoved off shorewards before she recovered, and now Rory, who was in charge of this boat, carefully covered her with a tarpaulin, that she might not catch a view of those dancing demons on the beach.

The boats rushed madly on, and though careful steering was needed, the oars were only of use to steady them, so great was the force of the wind and the scud of the surging sea.

'Stand by, men, to leap on shore and haul up the boats!' This from the captain.

His deep manly voice was heard over all the little fleet of three brave boats. But now arrows from shore began to drop around them. The savages were firing in the face of the gale, but their aim and strength were good, though no one was hurt. The captain's boat was first, and in it were Ailie and Ross McLean. He quietly lifted his rifle.

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'My parishioners,' he said, 'require a little lesson. I fear I must hurt one to encourage the others.'

He fired, and one man fell on the sand. The contents of a shot-gun considerably annoyed the others, and they fled, howling, into the dark forest. They bore their dead or wounded man with them, however.

'I trust he *is* dead,' said Ross sadly. 'If not, he soon will be. For the wounded, I am told, they kill and eat.'

Two boats were landed, and speedily hauled up high and dry. Alas! for the doom of the third, which was under the guidance of Allan. It seemed to have struck a rock or boulder, and immediately began to sink. Of the seven brave men in her, only two were saved, Allan himself and Markman, an ordinary seaman, both strong swimmers; the others never reappeared, so no effort could be made to save them.

Little Tronso shook himself when he landed, as if he had only just come up out of a mill-dam. Vasto and Czarina were already on shore. They stood there for a moment sniffing the air, then with a low but fierce growl they disappeared into the forest.

The shrieks and yells that followed showed how terrorized the savages must have been, and it was supposed that they had succeeded in climbing the trees nearest them, and so escaping. Anyhow, the dogs soon returned, Czarina with a spear in her mouth, which she placed at her master's feet. And Vasto had a guanaco skin, which he coolly spread on the sands, and after turning round and round several times went quietly to sleep on it. Vasto had not the

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storm-resisting coat which the baron's pet possessed, and therefore he dearly loved a mat placed in the sunshine.

It was still early morning, but the men had breakfast, though every heart was saddened by the loss of the ship, and nothing was talked about except the untimely death of their poor messmates, three of whom were especial favourites with all hands.

By nine o'clock, though seas still broke on this exposed beach, they found a sheltered cove, to which they dragged their boats and launched them.

All that day, and until darkling, the crew worked hard 'twixt ship and shore, and saved almost everything that could be of service, especially canvas, provisions, guns, and ammunition.

The night was dark and calm, but very cold. No tent was erected, and no fire was lit, to draw a shower of arrows from any foe that might lurk in the forest.

An armed watch was set, as if they had been on board ship, and Vasto constituted himself sentry. Only once, about midnight, did he give an alarm, and instantly a couple of rifles were fired point-blank into the forest. There was no further alarm, and all were up from under the canvas before the glorious sun, and thus in time to behold one of the most resplendent sunrises ever they had seen.

Ross McLean conducted a brief morning service, thanking Him who rules on land and sea for their marvellous deliverance, praying for the relatives of those who were swallowed up in the great deep, and for help and assistance in the dark days that they knew were now before them.

And the ship? There was not a trace of her to be

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seen; she had been sucked back on the tide and engulfed. That she had broken up was evident, for timbers and spars kept floating on shore for many days to come.

They now determined to build huts with the ship's timbers, with canvas and branches of trees from the forest. But that same forest hid an apparently implacable and savage foe. It was far too near the little bay for safety. So that same evening, after securing all that was needed from it, the brush or dry undergrowth was set on fire.

Fanned by the wind which the flames sucked in from seawards, the wood was soon one vast fiery furnace, that appalled the stoutest heart to look upon. It was really a pity to sacrifice so lovely a forest, now all in its summer pride and beauty. Trailing flowers and climbers, many thorny, had made it almost a jungle beneath.

In the foreground were magnificent magnolias in fullest bloom, with beeches and many another species of tree, with which every one who has visited the far north are familiar enough. Sufficient clearance, however, was thus made even in one night to ensure comparative safety.

This island, it transpired afterwards, had never been visited before by any missionary whatever, and this must account for the terrible ignorance, the squalor, and savageness of the tribe of Youghans that had tried to resist the landing of the shipwrecked crew. It was now found that a fire so terrible had terrorized and almost paralyzed the poor beings who lived in the wooded districts and mountain glens of the country. Nevertheless, there was no saying when

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they might recoup their courage, and return in force.

That this strange romantic island must be their homes for long months to come was evident to every one. But, luckily, they had saved nearly all their most useful tools, and Uncle Jack resolved to set about hut-building almost at once.

Perhaps the happiest man among these Crusoes was honest Ross McLean. To tell the truth, neither he nor any other man cares a deal for living all alone among tribes of wild men only a little elevated, if at all, above brutes. He would have the company now of his dear friends and old messmates.

Moreover, he claimed these savage Youghans as his own. He was to be a civil power reigning over them; the others, from the baron and Captain Jack downwards, could only act as a defensive force.

Besides this, he was anxious once for all to find out what kindness and the light of Christianity could do to ameliorate the condition and soften the hearts of savages such as these.

Ross McLean had already learnt a little of the language of other islanders in this vast Antarctic country, from one who had resided among them for many years. It turned out afterwards, however, that the dialect the inhabitants of this island spoke was at least as different as that of pure Dutch from English.

They named the place Ailiena, after our heroine, and she was very proud in consequence.

'Before settling down to serious work,' said Uncle Jack, 'I think it might be as well if we circumnavigated the island, or a part of it, for we might thus find a better place than this to build our huts upon.'

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'I'm so glad,' said Rory; 'for, faith, the sight of those blackened, leafless trees is enough to take the poetry clean out of the soul of a man. Instead of its now being the beautiful isle of St. Ailiena, sure it would be better named the Isle of Despair.'

'There is something in what you say,' said the baron; 'I myself like not those scorched and blackened tree demons. They are bad enough now, but when winter comes—ugh!' The baron shrugged his shoulders significantly.

Leaving the greater portion of his men and officers to fell timber, Uncle Jack and a few hands left in a boat. They were away nearly all day, and found the isle so large that it was impossible to circumnavigate it in one day. But they brought good news: only a few miles to the north and west was a beautiful bay, with a broad sandy beach above it, and a clear green space of 150 yards all around. After this, a most lovely and gorgeous forest—an amphitheatre, in fact—with a clear 'burnie' wimpling through the glen, and gliding softly into the sea.

Uncle Jack had named this Paradise Bay, and the stream the Maggie Burn[1], just to please the maid. And this little river was really alive with beautiful dark-red speckled trout. They passed the night as before, but early next morning migration commenced, and was completed before twilight began to fall.

The days here were exceedingly long at this season, and the sunshine crimsoned the lofty mountain peaks for some time after the purple shadows had fallen over vale and bay.

There was a good old carpenter here, whose name

[1] *Burn* (Scotticè) = a small stream.

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was Mearns, who had sailed with Uncle Jack before, and who now proved himself a capital architect.

That same night, after his messmates had enjoyed their supper, and were sitting or reclining on the beach yarning or smoking, old Mearns, as he was called, was very busy indeed. He had procured about fifty straight stakes three to four feet long. The ends of these were pointed, the upper parts blazed with the axe, then, tearing a piece of red flannel he had got hold of into strips, he tied a morsel to each, so that it should flutter in the wind.

'Goin' to keep "the crows" off the potato patch?' said Rory, laughing.

Old Mearns looked up and smiled.

'My dear young sir,' he replied, 'I've been among savages maybe afore you were born. I knows the beggars well, sir. Now you'll be building a palisade to keep these savage cannibals off. This'll do the job better'n twenty palisades.'

Taking a few hands with him next day to carry the stakes, he had them set firmly into the ground the sea side of the woodlands.

'That'll scare the gentlemen,' he said.

And really it did, or seemed to. However, the Crusoes were not molested nor troubled with questionable visitors for quite a long time. Vasto and Czarina enjoyed themselves most thoroughly now; many a swim they had in the blue clear bay, and many a rant and roll on the greensward and all among the wee pink flowers that daisied it over.

Meanwhile, more wood was procured from the forest, and the work of hut-building was pushed right merrily but steadfastly on. Additional branches

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had also to be cut in the forest; and several times the natives were seen, but a growl from either of the great dogs and a shot from a revolver were sufficient to send them back into the higher reaches of the forest and hills.

The camp, when finished, was most complete. And not only the chief saloon, as it was nautically termed, but the men's hall had a large rock-built fireplace and chimney to it.

. . . . . .

And now Ross began to make friends with the wretched natives. He took his own way, and it was curious, but in the end successful. He tamed them just as one may tame wild birds, by placing food down for them on the border of the forest. The first morning he found it untouched. Next morning every scrap had gone, and after this they were on the outlook for the good man, as they henceforth always styled him, and hardly had he departed ere they descended like ravens to procure the biscuits. But he generally found that before leaving they fired arrows at old Mearns' witchcraft frolics.

Ross had many of these removed, and in a few weeks' time they were tame enough, as Ross termed it, to eat out of his hand.

Then Ross took his second step towards conquest, by kindness, of the St. Ailienan savages. Ross made friends of the ladies. They were terribly ugly, like the men, clad in guanaco and many other sorts of skins, as well as their own, which were filthy in the extreme.

How did he manage? Oh, easily enough; for all the girls one meets 'twixt Kamschatka and the

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Antarctic are fond of pretty things. Ross had a large store of beads, and these he caused Maggie to string for him into necklets and bracelets, and—— Well, they were soon tame enough to ask for more.

This wise and kindly missionary now held daily intercourse with the savages, and picked up in two months quite a deal of their dialect, and in company with Vasto, whom they looked upon with awe and admiration, he used to accompany them into the woodland glens where they had their winter homes. There were huts and holes in the rocks, the former roofed over, and the latter lined with the branches of trees and dried ferns, lichens, and moss.

Ross now took step No. 3. He invited some of the less savage-looking of the men and squaws to the camp at Paradise Bay. They came armed to the teeth with bows and arrows and spears, but so well were they treated that they soon seemed perfectly at home. Then Ross took the carpenter with him and five men into the interior, and commenced to show the natives how to build better huts. They became very apt pupils, though sometimes they were as wayward as children.

However, before autumn bedded the open glades and woodlands with a wealth of crimson and orange flowers, they had managed to form not one camp but a great many smaller ones. Quite a village, in fact. But this was not all. Spare canvas was given them. The sail-maker taught them to sew. Ailie herself superintended the making of comfortable overmantles for both men and women, and showed them also how to line these ponchos with the skins of otters and beasts of the forest.

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Ross McLean's triumph was complete, and now he was in a position to commence to teach and preach. Superstition began to fly away, and they listened intently when in plain, simple language, and the shortest of sentences, he told them of the great Good Father who lived far beyond the clouds, of a Saviour who loved them so much that He had laid down His life to save them from their sins, and of a heaven which, if they were good here below, they should hereafter inherit. And soon now there was constant intercourse between the savages and Paradise Camp.

With guides he attempted to make his way into the interior, but there were dark and gloomy glens and hills which they refused to go near, because their enemies lived there, and ate much men after fighting. 'Kill, kill; and eat, eat,' was their motto; so Ross thought it best to keep at a safe distance from these for the time being, but he would try his powers later on. Meanwhile he contented himself with preaching to his own parishioners.

Well, he had done some good. He had lit the lamps of a primitive Christianity and civilization, and who could tell the distance their light might not penetrate? But one day a strange thing happened. An old man of erect but sturdy form took Ross aside, and beckoned to him to follow into the forest. A mystery was to be unfolded, and a wonderful discovery made.

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CHAPTER XXIV

MEARNS AND HIS NUGGET

ON and on through the forest for miles did Ross follow the savage patriarch. He dreaded no ill. His Bible was in his bosom. This was his comfort; and physically he was fit for ten such old men, especially with Vasto by his side. At the head of a glen, and near a tree from which the autumn leaves were silently fluttering downwards, he found a cairn of stones. His companion drew him back in terror, as Ross attempted to reach it.

'Evil spirit! evil spirit!' he cried.

But Ross darted forward and immediately began to lift the stones. A square stone bottle that had contained gin—evil spirit enough! Ross smashed it, and out fell a time-worn scrap of paper, on which, in a bold hand, the missionary could decipher these words, although the writing was faded and some words almost obliterated, as if by tears. They had been written in blood.

'*To all whom it may concern.*

'I, Patrick O'Flinn, of Connemara, Ireland, do hereby make my last will and testament, in sound body and sound health, though in terror of my life from a tribe of cannibals that live in the mountain

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fastnesses twenty miles from the spot at which I now write these lines.

'I have no ink, and my pen is a feather.

'My ship was the British barque Beaver. Driven far south by gale after gale, we foundered at last, John Spicer, Robert Fahey, and myself only escaping by lowering the dinghy.

'Tossed about for many days, and afterwards thrown on shore on this coast, John Spicer was dead, and Fahey was killed. Both were roasted in my presence and eaten by the cannibals.

'They treated me well, but in a battle with the highlanders I was taken prisoner. I am worn, feeble, and infirm with hardship, and now with trembling hands do I bury this bottle and raise a cairn. Whoever finds this, my last will, must bear it to my wife, if alive, at the little farm of Danestone; if she is dead, he needn't trouble, but just give it to Rory O'Flinn, my only son and heir, who must sail in search of the gold nuggets and dust that lie buried deep under this cairn. Heaven save the souls of us all, and may we all meet in realms above.

'(Signed) PATRICK O'FLINN.

'By the Grace of God.'

Strange and conflicting were now Ross McLean's emotions. He gathered up the fragments of the bottle and carefully rebuilt the cairn. Might not Rory's father be still alive? What a curious chain of events it was that brought the boy to this wild isle, to read the words of a father who might be long since dead! Truth is stranger far than fiction, and surely Shakespeare was right:

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'There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.'

Then a thought occurred to him, and he turned to the savage patriarch beside him.

'This man,' he asked, 'who made heap stones, where is he now?'

The old man pointed reverently aloft.

'In your good land,' he said—'a spirit. The mountain men kill quick, quick! Kill! Eat!'

And this, then, was the terrible fate of Rory's father. He hastened back to camp now, and called a council, and the wonderful news was broken to Rory. But Ross only testified as to his father's death, saying nothing about its cause. Then he read the letter, and Rory threw himself on the grass, and sobbed like a child.

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Next day the cairn was once more lifted, stone by stone, and in a rocky hole beneath was found quite a hoard of gold nuggets and dust. Uncle Jack and all there shook hands with Rory. The boy smiled sadly.

'Give me back,' he said, 'my father and my mother, and the little shieling on the green hillside in Connemara, and all that treasure shall be yours!'

. . . . . .

The gold was conveyed in canvas bags to the camp, and carefully stowed away under the saloon floor. The officers themselves did this. Not because they suspected that the men might steal the gold, but for quite another reason, which may be explained as follows: Neither Ailie nor her maid knew anything about either the letter or the treasure, and Rory did not wish them to.

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'I should not like,' he said simply, 'that dear sister Ailie knew poor Rory is now, or will be if ever we are restored to civilization, a wealthy man. I must still be poor Rory to her.'

Wild winter began now to creep on. The days grew short and dismal, and showers of hail and sleet poured on the grey uncertain sea, and over it. Forest and hills were covered with mist. Then came a clearer sky and a hard frost, and after this a blinding snow-storm that lasted for weeks.

And so the dark winter wore on and on. But with naked feet and half-frozen legs the natives still came for their daily dole to camp. Although they had been wise enough to store provisions for themselves—frozen fish and guanacos—the tit-bits they received from camp, and the words of kindness always spoken, seemed life to them, and they invariably went away happy.

Had these castaway mariners ever seen a ship? Yes; twice. Once in autumn, and once again on a clear day in the dead of winter. They were far to the east, it is true, but both flew British flags, and must have seen the frantic signals from the beach, as well as the reversed ensign which floated every fine day on a mound not far from the camp.

I am sorry indeed to bring the accusation of cruelty against our merchant service, but I could tell harder things than this. Alas!—

> 'Man's inhumanity to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn.'

Spring came round once more, and with it birds and buds and flowers. How glorious a thing is sunshine! How gladsome is light, not to us poor self-

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conceited mortals only, but to the meanest creature that creeps or moves! The days were soon long enough for our heroes to resume their outdoor sports by sea and by land. They never, however, ventured very far away from the island, for squalls of terrific violence oft blew in these treacherous though beautiful seas; and as Ailie frequently went off fishing with Allan and Rory, they feared more for her than for themselves.

Rory, too, noticed that she was paler than usual. Then a terrible and sudden fear seemed to stab him to the heart. What if she were to turn ill and die? He spoke to the doctor.

'Toot! toot!' said the latter; 'dinna be feared for snaw in summer, man. The lang dark winter has bleached her bluid a bit, but the fresh air and the sunshine will soon put that to richts.'

So Rory took her out often, and they fished together on fine days by the riverside. The burn was—one would have thought—much too clear, but then the fish were very far indeed from shy.

The Irish lad was as tender and gentle with Ailie as if she had been but a child, and many a journey did he make into the wild woods to gather for her spring's earlier flowers, strangely beautiful leaves and buds, with which the forest abounded. He was delighted, therefore, to notice that the pink hues of health were returning to her cheeks, and that her lips were cherry-ripe once more.

The men were not idle, nor the natives either, and Ross McLean with his great dog was ever on the move. Firing had to be procured from the woods. One day the old man Mearns had been prospecting

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at some distance from the camp. He had been a miner at one time, though he had not made his pile. He noticed here on a hillside much blue-veined quartz, and made certain that at some not very distant day he should find gold. But on this particular forenoon he found that without which the world at present would be poor enough indeed. He found coal. The natives helped to dig and to carry it to camp in baskets made from willows that grew here in abundance.

The life our Crusoes were now leading might have been called idyllic, except for the thought that they appeared to be out of the usual track of all ships, far from the great ocean highways, and therefore cut off from the outer world.

Hill-climbing formed one of the baron's chief pleasures, always accompanied by some one of his messmates, but usually leaving Czarina in camp. The views from some of the highest hills, which towered upwards to a height of about 3,000 feet, were very grand and solemn indeed, and from a peak they could see all around them the wide blue sea dotted with many another little green island, which they believed were inhabited, for with the telescope they could see smoke at times, and at times dark objects moving about in the water, which they believed were canoes, but which might have been sea-elephants.

They could trace also the configuration of their own island St. Ailiena, and its great extent, for it must have been five-and-forty miles in circumference. On the south side, from which the winter gales blew most frequently, it was much indented, but even here terrible precipices—the home of many a sea-bird—

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hung darkling over the deep southern ocean. At a very long distance the voices of those birds could be heard, falling on the ear in a kind of raucous hum.

But from the mountain-tops they gazed many times and oft, but gazed in vain, for the ship that never came. An indescribable longing for home took possession of nearly all hearts, even when the summer was still young and the magnolias gemmed with beautiful flowers.

In some of the men this amounted to an ailment doctors call 'nostalgia,' and humbler folk home-sickness. Nevertheless, do what he would to keep them employed, no less than three poor fellows died of it. They died quietly, calmly, and leaving trinkets for their distant friends, and many a loving message for sisters or mothers from their 'own old Jack or Bill,' as the case might be.

Ailie and Maggie as well assisted the doctor in nursing these men, and when all was over they were sewn in their hammocks and buried at sea.

Ross's 'parishioners' were by this time marvellously improved, and used to listen intently to all his teachings. He tried, moreover, to teach them the art of defence, so that they might be better able to defend themselves against their enemies.

Their strange woodland village was, by this time, surrounded by a strong palisade. They were also taught something of the art of cookery. Of horticulture also; and with wooden spades they were shown how to turn over the ground and plant roots and fruit bushes, and sow seeds.

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All this could only end in good for these strange

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AILIE WAS CARRIED OFF TO THE MOUNTAINS.

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islanders. Brave Ross had sown the seeds in their minds. The harvest would be sure to follow one day.

But on a beautiful forenoon in November (early summer), while Ross with Ailie and Rory were in the village, suddenly in rushed old Mearns, rifle in hand. He had terrible news to give them. The cannibal highlanders, armed with spears and bows, and almost nude, with their skins covered with their hideous war-paint, daubs of red and white clay, were even then bearing down upon the village. There was no time to lose, but the old man was almost exhausted. Who then, save Rory, must bear a message to the camp? Probably Rory had never run so quickly in his life, and even on a ship of war sailors never flew more quickly to arms than they did.

They were quickly armed with rifles and cartridges galore, and leaving Paradise Camp in charge of but a few hands under Allan, they followed Rory quickly up the glen. Judge of their consternation on being met half-way by the friendly tribe, with the news that the village had been captured after a desperate struggle, in which many had fallen, among them the brave missionary; and that Ailie had been carried off to the mountains!

This was fearful news for all hands, but more especially for Rory. He stood like one transfixed for a few minutes, turning red and white by turns. Then raising his hand towards heaven he cried, with true Celtic fire:

'By the bones of my poor dead father, I will save the child or die in my tracks!'

He would have rushed in by himself at that moment,

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armed only with knife and revolver, but the baron laid his hand on his shoulder, and his calm and placid reasoning soon brought Rory back to his senses.

They now made their way to the village, the friendly tribe, armed to the teeth, bringing up the rear. There were everywhere signs of a dreadful 'tulzie.' Dead natives—men, women, and even children—lay about among the wounded and groaning, and in one corner, into which he had evidently retreated, the better to defend himself, poor Ross was stretched, and his life seemed ebbing fast away. His dog lay close by him, a spear-wound on his shoulder. The honest fellow minded not that. His grief was pitiable to witness, as with a mournful whine he every now and then licked his master's face.

Near to them lay no less than five dead savages; three Ross had evidently killed with the spear that lay by his side, and two had as certainly been throttled by the brave dog.

The doctor knelt down beside the missionary, opened one drooping eyelid, and, shading it from the light, gazed long enough to see that the flame of life still flickered in the poor wounded body.

He now hastily dressed the wounds, a litter of branches was made, and Ross was entrusted to the hands of the natives, who bore him quickly yet tenderly back to camp.

Old man Mearns was dead enough. When he encountered the Antarctic highlanders he had been hurrying back to the camp with news that would soon cure home-sickness. He had found gold. Alas for the irony of Fate! The dead left hand was firmly closed over a large and glittering nugget.

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CHAPTER XXV

IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP

VASTO had walked into camp beside the litter—or was it a bier? Both Maggie and Allan did all in their power, all that they knew in fact, to restore the kindly but luckless minister. But he just slept on. No signs of life were there. And by his side lay Vasto, sadness in his every look.

. . . . . .

A long high bank of purple clouds lying close to the horizon, crimson and pink and grey above, and rifts of green between. That was the sky which Rory and Uncle Jack might have paused to admire at another time. The time was nearly midnight, and the little army of Britishers was high up on a hillside, even above the beeches.

But soon now they would descend, and be swallowed up in the darkness and gloom of a primaeval forest, where, in a large glade, the savages were holding high revels to celebrate the victory of the day.

A huge fire burned in the centre ; its smoke and sparks rolling thick over the adjoining woods would hide the approach of an enemy. And that enemy was now crawling onwards ; each man silent as a serpent that glides over green moss. Armed and determined !

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Those human beasts had ears as acute as the flitting bats, but they were now engaged at a feast too awful even to name. Near to a man clad from head to heels in otter-skins, with a cap of the same, from which grizzled and tangled locks of hair fell over his burly shoulders, sat a medicine-man or priest, for these highlanders had a rude sort of civilization of their own.

The medicine-man was singing a low chant, accompanied by the bass rat-tat-tat of a bloodstained tum-tum, and ever and anon the warriors raised their voices in a wild and demon-like chorus that seemed to be echoed back by the screeching of wild birds in the forest.

Vengeance was coming! 'Vengeance does not belong to us,' said one; 'but precious lives must be saved, and these savages must be taught a lesson.' Not more than fifty yards from the revellers crouched four determined men, Uncle Jack, Rory, Baron Ranzikoff, and the doctor. Behind were the seamen.

Uncle placed his hand on Rory's arm.

'Be still,' he whispered. 'Haste and excitement will ruin all. Fire when I give the word.'

On a raised seat not far from the chief, and surrounded by hideous old squaws, sat Ailie. She was in reality enthroned. She was covered with wild flowers—her hair, her shoulders, her dress. But she sat there like a marble statue, seeming to know nothing, to care for nothing. Uncle Jack turned slowly and quietly round to his armed men behind.

'Fire at the word!' he said in a low voice. 'Fire only at that band of savages round the fire and in yon farther corner of the glade.

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'Ready!

'Aim!!

'Fire!!!'

The first words were barely audible—the last was thundered out.

What immediately occurred was graphic in the extreme. The volley was a telling one. The savages yelled with pain or terror. Squaws fled back into the darkling forest, and for just a moment or two Ailie was left alone.

But the savage chief had seized his spear, and with a wild shout dashed on towards the helpless girl. All seemed lost, for to fire now would have endangered poor Ailie's life. Though 'twere all as well, perhaps, to die by the bullet of a friend as be slaughtered by spear of savage.

'On! on! Czarina!' cried Baron Ranzikoff. 'Catch and kill!'

He had already slipped her leash. But the spear is raised. Can she be in time?

Yes, for Borzois bound with lightning speed. See, she is at him, on him, and has slain him as she would have killed a wolf.

Next minute Ailie is being borne away in the sturdy arms of Rory himself. He bears her off into the woods, and lays his burden on the moss beneath the scented boughs of a spreading magnolia. For a moment she is dazed, and looks bewilderingly around her.

'Do you know me, Ailie? Speak, speak, or poor Rory will die!'

'I know you, Rory,' she said, with a faint smile. Then burst into a flood of tears.

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The young hero stayed with her. He had come here to fight, but, let the battle rage on as it might, he must be here. This was *his* place. And the battle did rage on around the trees; the sturdy highlanders made a stout resistance. But revolvers did their deadly work at close quarters, and though one or two of those brave Britons fell, the enemy finally fled.

. . . . . .

That same forenoon all were back once more at Paradise Vale. Ailie was already here, and, strange to say, although she was a little more subdued and quiet, the terrible fright she had received in the enemy's camp would have—the doctor told poor anxious Rory—but little bad effect.

'I must leave you or the baron to doctor her,' said Dr. Grant; 'I've gotten work on hand that will need all my skill to accomplish.'

He referred to the wounded both among his own men and the natives, but especially, perhaps, to the brave missionary, Ross McLean. Uncle Jack and Baron Ranzikoff went on tiptoe to the cool little grass hut, in which the injured man lay on a bed of the softest dry moss.

Maggie, whom Grant called 'Nursie,' was kneeling near, holding a basin with cold water therein and a sponge, while beside her the doctor was dressing Ross's wounds. Uncle Jack said nothing until the doctor had finished and stood up. Ross McLean was still unconscious, and breathing heavily.

'Any hope, doctor?'

The honest Scot shook his head.

'We'll do all we can, captain,' he replied. 'That's

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duty. We'll leave the rest to God. That is true religion.'

Grant now sent Maggie with a soothing draught to her mistress.

Away went Maggie, but found her not in the saloon. But presently, after a search by the beach and along the edge of the forest, she came upon her well-loved mistress sitting by Rory's side under the shade of a green-leaved flower-tree.

'Beggin' your pardon, Mr. Rory, but Miss Adair is to drink hevery drop of this physic. Them's the doctor's hexpress words. Now be good, miss, like a dear, and drink it hoff!'

Ailie smiled somewhat, but obeyed orders.

'There now,' said Maggie, laughing; 'and if there was e'er a sugar-plum she should have it.'

And off ran Maggie singing to herself. She was a light-hearted girl.

Neither wounded men nor dead men troubled Maggie much.

She was building a little castle to herself as she now marched along.

'Heigho!' she said; 'I wonder how all this will hend. Of course we'll get back to Hengland shores some'ow. And why shouldn't a poor girl like me get married—so pretty too, for the baron, bless 'im, as much as told me so. Will the parson die? That's most a pity; parsons is 'andy sometimes. Well, the baron will marry Ailie. That's right enough, and Rory will marry Maggie. That's me. Hooray!'

The draught seemed to strengthen and raise Ailie's spirits somewhat, and she sat listening to the stories Rory told her of his life and struggles as a boy, and

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his wanderings in England when he played the flute to help him along on his weary journey to Southampton.

Then he told her about the first money he got, the shilling with the hole in it. It was pinned to the left side of his vest, as if it had been a medal.

'I've said I never would part with it at all, Ailie; but troth, it is afraid of losing it I am. Do keep it for me, asthore.'

And, as the old song says,

> 'The melting tear stood in his eye,
> What heart could say him nay?'

And now Rory took out his flute, and if those sweet old Irish airs he played could not have touched her heart, surely nothing on earth could have done so.

Oh, the power of music! It was in *Ailie's* eyes now that the tears stood.

Let us back to camp, and leave them there a little while.

There was a good deal of stir here, but very little noise. The weather promised to be fine, and under a single spreading tree that stood not far from the Maggie Burn, Surgeon Grant had a kind of rude hut, or rather shed, made, its open front looking on to the sea. Here the wounded were placed, five in all, on beds of ferns and moss.

Not long after this a boat was got ready. The dead must be buried at sea. And that same evening, while sweetly shone the sun on heaving waters, a boat was lowered, containing the bodies of the brave fellows who had fallen in battle. Uncle Jack himself said prayers, or rather he prayed with his whole heart and

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soul rising heavenwards. And even the baron's eyes were moist, as one by one the hammocks dropped over the stern, and sank beneath the waves. And that is a sailor's grave.

Perhaps the most affecting thing to witness was the silent grief of Vasto for his poor master. He hardly ever left his side for a moment, and refused everything offered to him in the shape of food, though he lapped a little water that Maggie brought him from the burn. Often he would get up, and, after looking at the prostrate form of his master, would tenderly lick his hand. Who can tell what thoughts and memories were passing through the noble, faithful fellow's mind at a time like this?

It was nearly midnight before the good doctor retired to snatch an hour or two of well-earned repose, leaving Allan to watch by his dear friend's couch. Dr. Grant slept longer than he had meant to, but now, throwing on his lightest tropical dress, he went hurrying away towards Ross's hut.

He had not proceeded many yards, however, before great Vasto came bounding towards him.

'My poor patient is dead!' said the doctor; 'and this wisest of dogs comes to tell me!'

But a glance into Vasto's drab eyes showed him nothing but joy. Vasto held his head a little to one side, and barked furiously up at him. Then seizing the doctor by the jacket, he never let go till he had pulled him to the door of the hut. And the first thing he saw was Ross sitting half up, pale and feeble-looking, and leaning his head on Allan's broad shoulder.

There was real joy in the camp that day, when

Grant reported Ross out of danger, and all the rest of his patients doing well.

Now it was never known what was to have been the ultimate fate of poor Ailie when she was borne in triumph into the cannibals' camp. Why had they decorated her with flowers? Was she to have been made queen? Or was she after a time to be the victim of a terrible orgie, worse by far than that which our heroes had witnessed? These were questions none could answer.

Several weeks passed away. A new camp or village had been built for Ross's parishioners, to whom, as he leant feebly on Allan's arm, he was now able to speak a few words of comfort.

These Christian natives—we may call them so now, I think—were safe enough here; for although Rory and the baron made several scouting excursions into the dark woods close to the enemy's villages, they could see no signs of an Antarctic highlander.

Time flew by. It was now a little past midsummer, early in January, when Ross McLean told the baron and Uncle Jack that he did not consider his work half accomplished, adding that when the large boat all hands had commenced to build, in order to try therein to reach the mainland, and possibly some white men's camp, was ready, he would remain on this island and do the work to which Heaven seemed to have called him.

But one day Vasto, when wandering in the forest—this time with Rory and Allan both—went off, and they heard the dog barking loud farther down the forest.

They looked to their rifles and revolvers, and dashed on.

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Vasto had caught an Antarctic highlander, that was all.

Very different indeed was Vasto's prisoner from any highlander you are ever likely to see in Scotland, reader, in dress and manners and appearance. Yet this spear-armed savage was brave. But the dog had paralyzed his energies, taken away his spear, and was found keeping guard over his prostrate form.

Ross patted and praised the dog. 'Heaven,' said this kindly parson, 'has put this man in our power; I am going to try to do good by his means.'

There was great surprise when the little party marched into camp with the prisoner, close at whose heels the great Vasto was walking—and watching. Though confined in a kind of prison-hut, the man was very well cared for and most tenderly used, and often expressed his thanks in his own strange language. A poor squaw carrying a baby arrived in camp some days after. It was Seenaw's wife, and her joy at seeing her husband alive and well was quite affecting.

And now Ross McLean had fully recovered, and, his heart as undaunted as ever, began to put his plans into execution. The prisoner and his wife were loaded with good things, a little string of beads being hung even around baby's neck, and then Ross made them a speech. The white man, they were to tell their people, had not come here to fight, but to do them good, and he invited Seenaw's clan to visit the camp and see for themselves.

Now hill-men are braver than plains-men, or the dwellers in green forests. It is, perhaps, merely a matter of strength and good health, but the fact is

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indisputable. So our people were in no ways surprised when two days after this no less than two hundred savage and almost naked warriors arrived near the camp.

The village Indians fled to their camp, but prepared to fight. Then, with nothing but his Bible in his hand, bold Ross approached the cannibals and bade them welcome. They threw down their spears and bows, and rushed to greet him. Vasto did not like it at first, and instantly cleared for action; but, seeing that none of these savages wanted to eat his dear master, he stole a guanaco-skin, and went romping with Czarina round and round the camp.

It is pleasing to have to relate that in a very short time Ross managed to establish peace throughout the island. I am not prepared to say at present whether that peace lasted, but a little spark of Christianity can kindle a great fire.

. . . . . .

The big boat was ready at last, masts, rudder, sails, and all complete. I may add that though the place where old Mearns discovered the nugget has not yet been found, it will be perhaps before this year is out.

One morning, shortly before our shipwrecked mariners were about to embark in that huge half-deck boat, Maggie the maid came in with a rush and a run, followed by all the dogs, excited and barking.

'Come, come!' she gasped; 'a steamboat—a big, big ship!'

Every one was on the beach in a minute or less, making signals to a British man-o'-war.

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'Oh! she sees us not! she sees us not!' cried Ailie, wringing her hands, for the ship passed on.

And strong men threw themselves on the beach, buried their faces in their hands and sobbed.

'Cheer up, men! cheer up!' cried Uncle Jack. 'Never fear! I mean to save you all yet, and *shall*.'

Then, half ashamed of their weakness, the men arose and walked slowly back to camp.

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CHAPTER XXVI

HAUL DOWN THE FLAG!

THERE is nothing lasting in this world, reader. Nay, never fear, I am not going to preach, or place before you mere platitudes. Yet partings and farewells are never pleasant, and I always feel a little sad towards the end of a story. But the time has come. We have roamed o'er many lands, and sailed long together o'er many a sea, and now at last we are safe and snug in harbour.

My story is like a ship—I must clew sails, and pay off my crew. Then *tableaux vivants*, and I shall finish my tale.

. . . . . .

The man-o'-war that poor Maggie had been the first to see on the distant horizon, but which had passed on and made never a sign, did not go far. The fact is, she was merely searching for deep water, that she might get safely nearer to the shore. For the island on which our Crusoes dwelt was not then on most British charts, or if it was, it had not been surveyed. So the captain of that cruiser had to be cautious.

But when at last she turned, and after a little more manœuvring an anchor was let go, and the sound of

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the chain rushing downwards into the sea came rippling over the waves, surely no sweeter music ever fell on the ears of a castaway crew. And now behold the blue-jackets in two huge boats, and dashing on towards the shore.

A happy meeting? I should just think it was! And I am not sure that the blue-jackets were not just as happy as the Crusoes. Would you believe it, that while a distinguished-looking and handsome young officer in navy-blue and gold doffed his cap as he shook hands with Ailie, one bold sailor—coxswain of the liberty boat—actually caught Maggie the maid in his arms, and kissed her.

Then Rory remembered his flute, and out it came. He jumped upon a box, and clear and sweet on the morning air rang out the merry notes of *Banks's Hornpipe*.

This was too much for the coxswain. Still holding Maggie by the hand, 'Hurrah, boys!' he cried; 'fill the floor!' And filled the floor speedily was, and the air rang with the shouts of the capering, dancing sailors. The Crusoes joined in, of course, and perhaps such a scene was never witnessed before.

'Hi!' cried a man-o'-war sailor to the coxswain; 'has nobody got a soul to be saved but yourself? Hand the pretty girl over, and let *me* have a turn.'

'That be bothered for a yarn. Find a partner for yourself!'

And the tar soon did—one of the ugliest squaws he could get—for the dancing went wildly on, till at last the roar of a great gun came booming over the water, and the natives screamed with fright.

'That's the recall,' said the lieutenant in command.

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Two hours after this the Crusoes had bidden farewell to their savage friends on shore, Ross giving them all the presents and beads he had left, and the little fleet, with all their worldly goods, were rowing rapidly away. That evening the Isle of St. Ailiena was seen but as a little cloud in the far-distant horizon.

The officers and men of H.M.S. Sea Elephant behaved with the greatest kindness and courtesy to all. The former gave up cabins to Ailie, to Uncle Jack, and to the Russian baron, and even the dogs had real good times of it, and were just as often as not in the wardroom.

Uncle Jack, with Ailie and his friends, had luncheon with the captain every day, but they all dined in the wardroom. Ailie was the joy of the mess; and there was hardly an officer there, from the brawny commander downwards in rank to the active and talkative little assistant-paymaster, who did not seem to lose his heart to Ailie before the ship was near the line—for she was homeward bound.

But if Ailie was the joy of the mess, Rory was its incarnate spirit of fun. His droll little stories, his queer but witty sayings, and his liquid Irish brogue, kept the table in a roar. Nor did he ever refuse to sing and play when asked, and so it is no wonder that he was a general favourite.

Well, Lieutenant Jack Stormaway was the pride of the Sea Elephant's mess, and even the A.B.'s and ordinary seamen liked him. A curly blue-eyed Cornishman he was. Handsome, brave of course—I never met a West Countryman who wasn't—and very strong. He was just the sort of young fellow who

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would have headed the people and marched forth to rescue Trelawney.

By the way, I haven't the least idea who Trelawney was. I only just know that he must have been a hero of some kind, else no verses would have been written about him. My ignorance in some matters is very marked, and what I don't know would fill a lordly book. But I always know beforehand what is going to be for dinner.

'And *shall* Trelawney die?
Then forty thousand Cornishmen
Will know the reason why.'

. . . . . .

Jack Stormaway was good at everything, so his mates said. He was a kind of Dr. Grace at cricket; a second-hand Paganini on the fiddle; he would have sung before Sims Reeves himself; boxed with Knucklebury and knocked him into cinders; his team generally won at football, and at lifting weights few had ever seen his match.

Well, one night when the ship was about opposite the Straits of Gibraltar, Jack Stormaway asked Ailie to come and look at the moonlight with him, from the bridge. The officer of the watch was up there talking to the baron, but Jack kept aloof from them.

Somehow, Ailie knew what was coming, and was prepared for what followed. Jack talked poetry, music, and moonshine. Ailie's thoughts seemed far away, and her replies were brief, and only made out of politeness. Then Jack got nearer the wind, as you might say. 'Ailie,' he said—he had always called her Miss Adair before, and she now felt a little hurt—'Ailie, had I a consort, how gently my barque

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would glide over the glad ocean of life! Ailie, have you a heart?'

'I suppose,' she replied, 'I am just like other people.'

'Say, Ailie, oh say, have you a hand to give with it, and I am thine for evermore!'

'Dear Mr. Stormaway,' she said, with tears in her eyes, 'I am sorry to vex you, but you must *never* talk to me in this way again.'

The baron came sauntering up, and Ailie seized his arm.

'Conduct me below,' she begged.

Jack looked after the pair for a moment. Then he whistled, 'Whew-ew! I see how the land lies. Just like my luck,' he muttered; 'and those verses I wrote for that Dublin girl would have done lovely for Ailie —only had to change the name. There, I shall——' He paused, and looked down at the sea. 'No, that isn't good enough—I shall—I—I—I shall light a cigar.'

And so he did.

. . . . . .

People who sail together for even a few months often come to like each other, and therefore, when the Sea Elephant reached Portsmouth, and our heroes and Crusoes had to leave, there was much hearty hand-shaking. Many promises to write also; but alas! in this busy world of ours such promises are very seldom kept.

I need say very little concerning Uncle Jack's and Allan's and Ailie's home-coming.

They had been reported lost, as is always the case with a ship when she is over her time, even if it be but for a few months.

Baron Ranzikoff paid off his crew and officers at

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Portsmouth. Though the ship was well insured, her loss was a great heart-break to him; only he was of a cheerful, hopeful mind, as all should be who mix with this world, especially if they have a journey to make right away to the other end of it.

And nothing, I think, would have prevented the baron from enjoying his sleep at night.

. . . . . .

At the railway station of the brisk and pretty little town where our friends turned up, they were met by old Muggins himself—as hale and weather-beaten as ever, too.

'Why, bless my boots, Muggins,' cried Uncle Jack; 'you don't look a day older than when we left!'

'No, sir, Father Time do seem a bit afraid to tackle a tough old seaworn barnacle like I. But here comes Capting Stunsail. He'll give ye all the noos, and I'll see arter the baggage.'

More welcomes! More hand-shaking!

'But what,' said Uncle Jack, 'has become of our mutual friend Bernard?'

'Ah, lad!' replied Stunsail, sadly; 'he had to hand in his log-book more than a twelvemonth ago. It was eight bells with him, and he didn't take long to turn out and keep his watch above.'

'Ah! well, well, Stunsail; but you'll come up to-night, won't you? Just for the days of "Auld lang syne," you know.'

How beautiful everything looked all around Castle Indolence! They had left autumn behind them in the far-off Southern Seas, but here was spring—nay, almost early summer. And inside nothing seemed altered, only the orlop deck was gay with flowers.

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What a deal every one had to say! and really it was two bells in the morning watch before the baron and Ross and Rory left, and the others prepared to turn in.

When Ailie awoke next morning, and found herself at home in her own room, for a minute or two she could hardly help thinking that all her wild adventures at sea and among savages were but part and parcel of a not too happy dream.

. . . . . .

Ross McLean, the brave missionary, went for a visit to his own romantic land on the banks of the queenly Tay, and Rory went with him to see his uncle. The baron, with his beautiful dog, was to be a guest at Castle Indolence until they returned. Uncle was well, and exceedingly pleased to see his nephew.

'Man!' he said, 'you've grown a fine fellow, but ye'll hae to tak' aff your dandy clothes afore you start the ploo (plough) again.'

Then Rory and his friend had a glorious time of it by the riverside; Vasto being always with them.

'Heigho!' said Rory one day after luncheon by the riverside; 'before we get back again, Ailie, the dream of my life, will be the Baroness Ranzikoff.'

'What nonsense!' cried Ross. 'Why, lad, she loves him but as a dear friend.'

'Ailie has told me much of her mind,' he added; 'more perhaps than even a clergyman should know. And, bless your honest but rather green sailor heart, Rory, there isn't a soul she'd wed in the world but your simple self.'

'Is it that you aren't making a fool of poor Rory entirely?'

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'I would not joke on so serious a subject.'

'Then hurroo!' cried Rory, tossing his cap in the air; 'it is like snails the days will be creeping until we get back to Castle Indolence.'

. . . . . .

It was a light-hearted merry party that assembled to dinner on the evening of the day on which Rory O'Flinn and his bride started off on their wedding tour.

To say nothing of all the good folks we know so well, including Stunsail, Jack Smith himself turned up. The three dogs were just as happy as any human being there, and after dinner, as they lay in their corner, you might have thought they were reminding each other of their wild adventures—*Here and There in Many Lands.*

. . . . . .

Uncle Jack still stays in the Castle of Indolence with his sister. He says he is not going to tempt the sea again. The baron visited them one day with his wife. Oh yes, he too got spliced—even sailors and wanderers do sometimes.

Allan is master mariner of as fine a ship as ever went dancing o'er ocean wave. But Rory has settled down on a pretty estate which he bought with his own gold, and Mrs. O'Flinn is said to be the happiest little wife on the banks of the Tay.

Haul down the flag! Good-bye, lads, and may every blessing this world can give fall as gently around you as flakes of snow on a Christmas lawn!

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